RE-ENVISIONING SOUTH OMAHA URBAN PARKS
WITH COMMUNITY DIVERSITY IN MIND

by

KATHERINE MARIE LEISE

A REPORT

submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

MASTER OF LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE

Department of Landscape Architecture and Regional & Community Planning
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Approved by:

Major Professor
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ABSTRACT

Public parks provide essential green space for people to congregate, exercise, and respite from the city. Urban public parks in the United States began with Frederick Law Olmsted and Calvert Vaux's Central Park in the mid-1800s (Cranz & Boland, 2004). Since then, planners and designers continue to design urban parks to best serve residents. Therefore, understanding user recreation patterns and preferences is critical for urban park design.

Several factors influence leisure styles, including ethnicity, that need to be considered by planners and designers. This study examines parks in South Omaha, Nebraska. Residents living in this area make up over ten different ethnic groups. Notably, Omaha's largest Hispanic community concentration resides in South Omaha. Through quantitative and qualitative research including site analysis, a literature search, precedent studies, and community interviews, important design considerations emerged.

This project presents design considerations and a conceptual redesign for two urban parks in South Omaha: Lynch Park and Spring Lake Park. The designs incorporated the leisure preferences and recreation patterns as revealed through interviews of the majority Hispanic community as well as European, Asian, and African minority ethnic groups. Precedent studies and literature research further informed redesign decisions by providing background knowledge on leisure research, design form, and demographic trends. Nevertheless, urban parks should ultimately respond to the users, regardless of cultural backgrounds, to meet the needs and requirements of all South Omaha residents.

RE-ENVISIONING SOUTH OMAHA URBAN PARKS

with community diversity in mind

KATHERINE LEISE

Re-Envisioning South Omaha Urban Parks with Community Diversity in Mind

Katherine M. Leise

Masters Report submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of :
Master of Landscape Architecture (MLA)

Major Professor: Howard Hahn
Supervisory Committee: Dr. Anne Beamish and Dr. Alisa Garni

Kansas State University
College of Architecture, Planning, and Design
Department of Landscape Architecture and Regional & Community Planning

APDESIGN
LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE
/ REGIONAL & COMMUNITY PLANNING
THE COLLEGE of
ARCHITECTURE, PLANNING & DESIGN

Abstract

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Introduction

The Master's Report allows students to undertake an independent project focusing on a specific area of interest related to a contemporary issue or idea in landscape architecture and provides students with an opportunity to demonstrate a high level of professional competence and ability to manage, organize, and complete a research endeavor. A major advisor and two additional faculty form a supervisory committee to assist the student in the development and execution of the project.

Two semesters are dedicated to the Master's Report. In the first semester, students develop a research topic, methodology, and anticipated conclusions. The second semester focuses on executing the methods, findings, and design solutions that respond to findings discovered. Students strive to demonstrate strong conceptual thinking through the application of scholarly methods to advance the landscape architecture profession. The products are communicated through a series of graphic, written, and oral presentations. Final conclusions and solutions clearly reveal research-based design and a high level of critical thinking.

Driving Forces

Parks have long served as a place of relief for city dwellers. People value parks for a variety of reasons and many support their creation. Planners and designers strive to provide people with accessible urban parks of adequate size and appropriate amenities. Research increasingly shows the benefits that city green space promotes, including physical (allowing for exercise), social (providing activity space for communities), and economic (raising property values) (Bodine Street Community Garden, 2003).

Park design initially inspired me to pursue landscape architecture, and the interest has continued through my college career. I find satisfaction in creating green spaces for people to occupy, enjoy within the city, and participate in socially and physically beneficial activities. I believe parks should integrate purposeful spaces for all demographics, and should not exclude an individual or group by failing to satisfy needs, spatially or programmatically. Democratic design that responds to the dominant user group is not enough for urban parks. Ethnic minorities can often fall into a forgotten sphere of consideration, because designers may then not truly understand or respond to their preferences and activity patterns.

Omaha, Nebraska's largest city, is located on the eastern border of the state (Figure 1.1), and has a population of 434,353 people within the city and 866,454 in the metro area (US Census Bureau, 2014 & Sperlings, 2014). South Omaha serves as an excellent area to consider urban park redesign because few currently cater to the community. South Omaha has over ten ethnic groups represented, including the highest concentration of Hispanic-Americans in Omaha, as seen in Figure 1.2. The Hispanic-American community is the largest ethnic minority group in the city at 13.1% of the population, is the fastest growing minority, and they live predominantly in South Omaha (US Census Bureau, 2014). Figure 1.3 illustrates the percent change in Hispanic-American residents from 2000 to 2011, with the largest increase located in South Omaha.

Figure 1.1 Nebraska. Photograph by Google Earth.

Considering the changing demographics of the city, planning and design must reflect a more holistic view of current residents. Unfortunately, there is often disconnect between ethnic group preferences and what urban parks offer. Because research shows different ethnic groups utilize parks in various ways (further discussed in Chapter 2: Background), it is likely parks in South Omaha do not meet the residents' needs. Interviews with South Omaha residents confirmed this assumption. Urban park design considerations and two conceptual park redesigns based on criteria established through literature and community engagement can better serve the South Omaha community.

Therefore, the research question addressed in this report asked: *How can existing urban parks in South Omaha, an area with a diverse ethnic population, be redesigned to better suit the preferences of the cultural community and still maintain flexible use?*

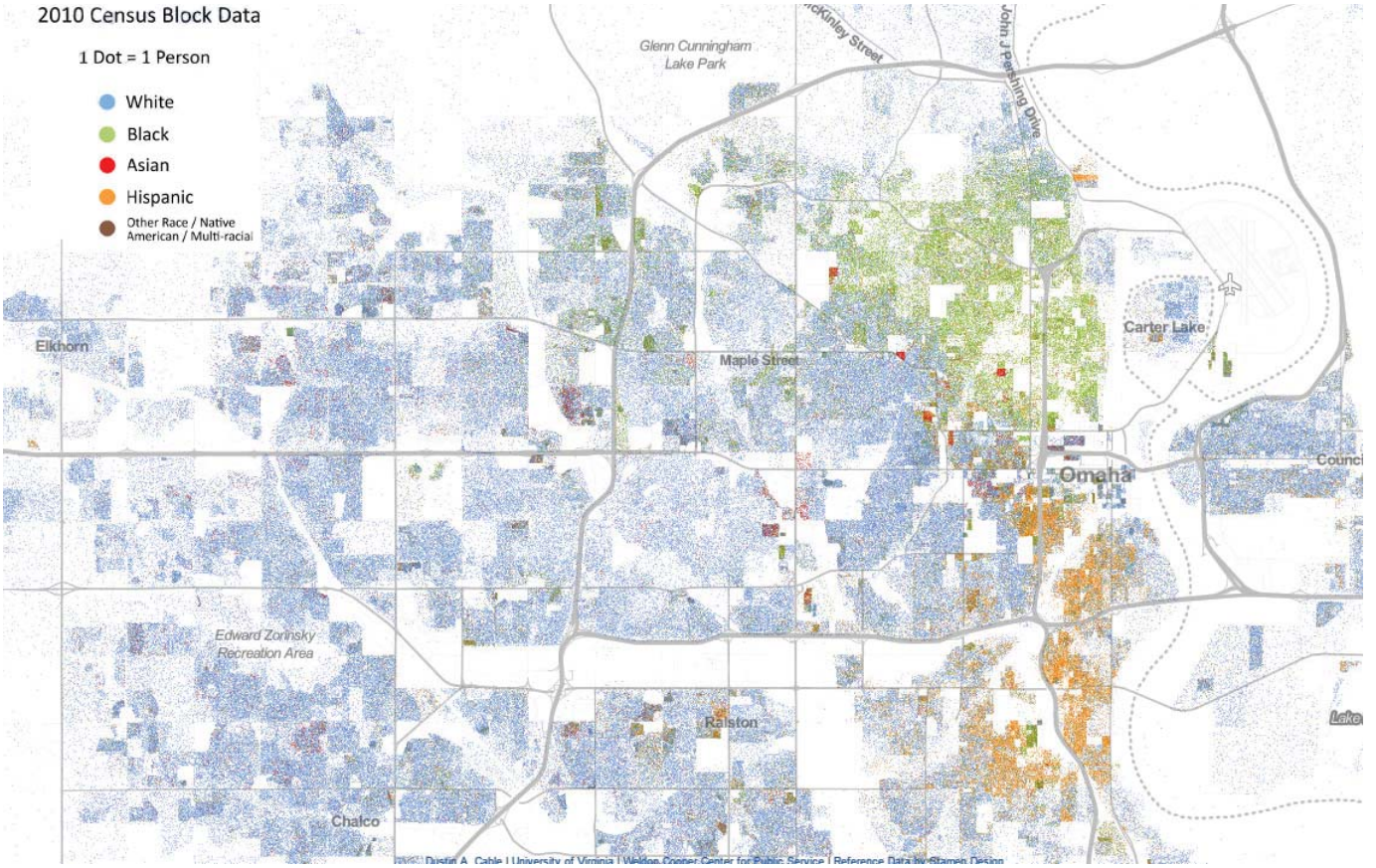


Figure 1.2 Racial and ethnic distribution in Omaha.
By Dustin A. Cable

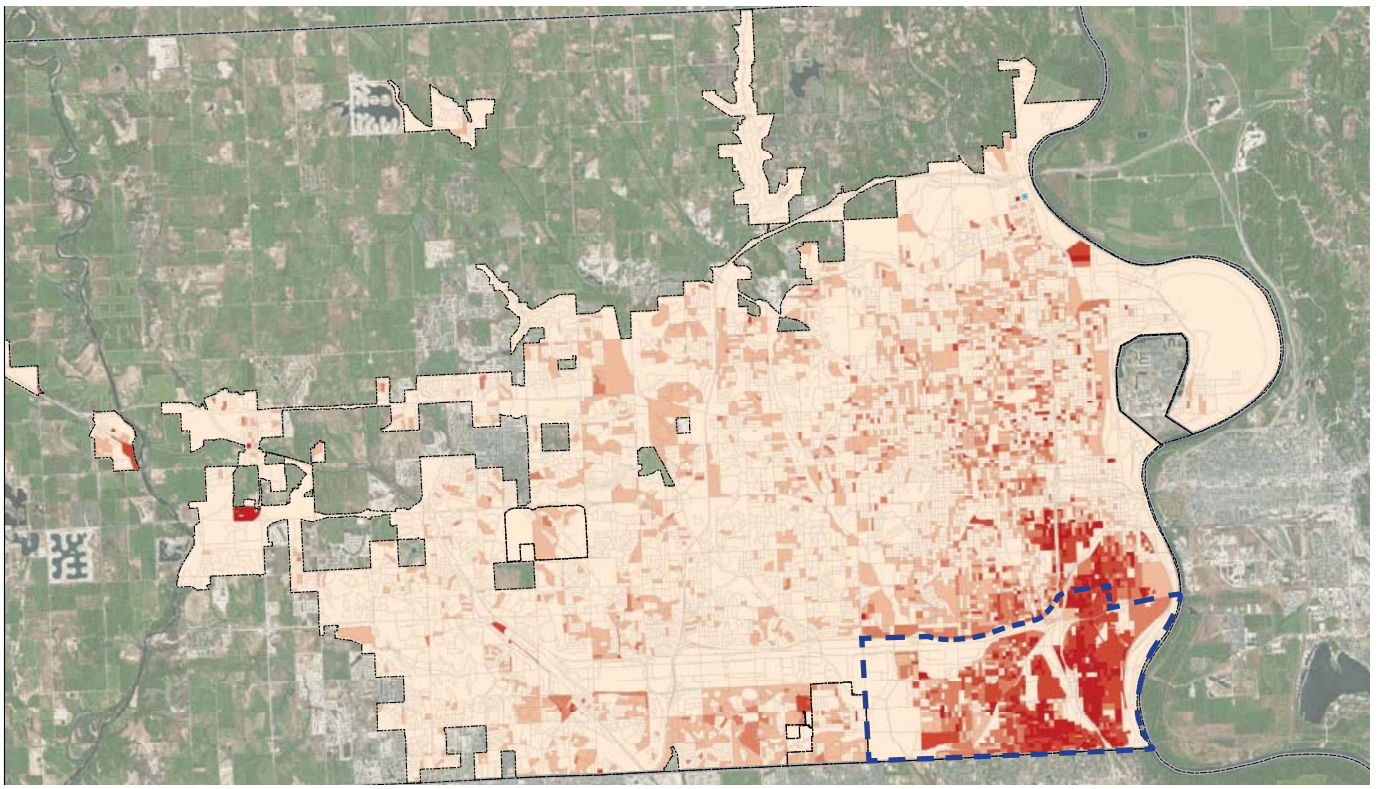


Figure 1.3 Hispanic American ethnic group concentration in Omaha. By Author

Project Goals

Three goals guided this research project:

- Identify demographic trends and shifts in Omaha, Nebraska
- Understand South Omaha community patterns preferences in urban parks with a focus on ethnic groups
- Relate this knowledge to redesign of urban parks in South Omaha

Because South Omaha has many parks and is highly diverse, the area had strong potential for findings relevant to landscape architects. Sub-goals and questions helped articulate the goals and guide research (Figure 1.4). A literature search, precedent studies, and site inventory and analysis informed the first two goals. Community engagement through interviews with key informants helped accomplish the third goal.

Findings synthesized from the methods aided to establish design goals and objectives that were applied to the site redesign of Lynch Park and Spring Lake Park in South Omaha. The final product presents design considerations and conceptual site designs. Future applications of this research could synthesize the report into a handbook to guide design of urban parks or public spaces in areas with diverse cultural populations or a high concentration of ethnic minority groups. This research could be relevant to city parks and recreation departments, landscape architects designing urban parks with a diverse user group, or firms seeking design considerations and engagement techniques for international work.

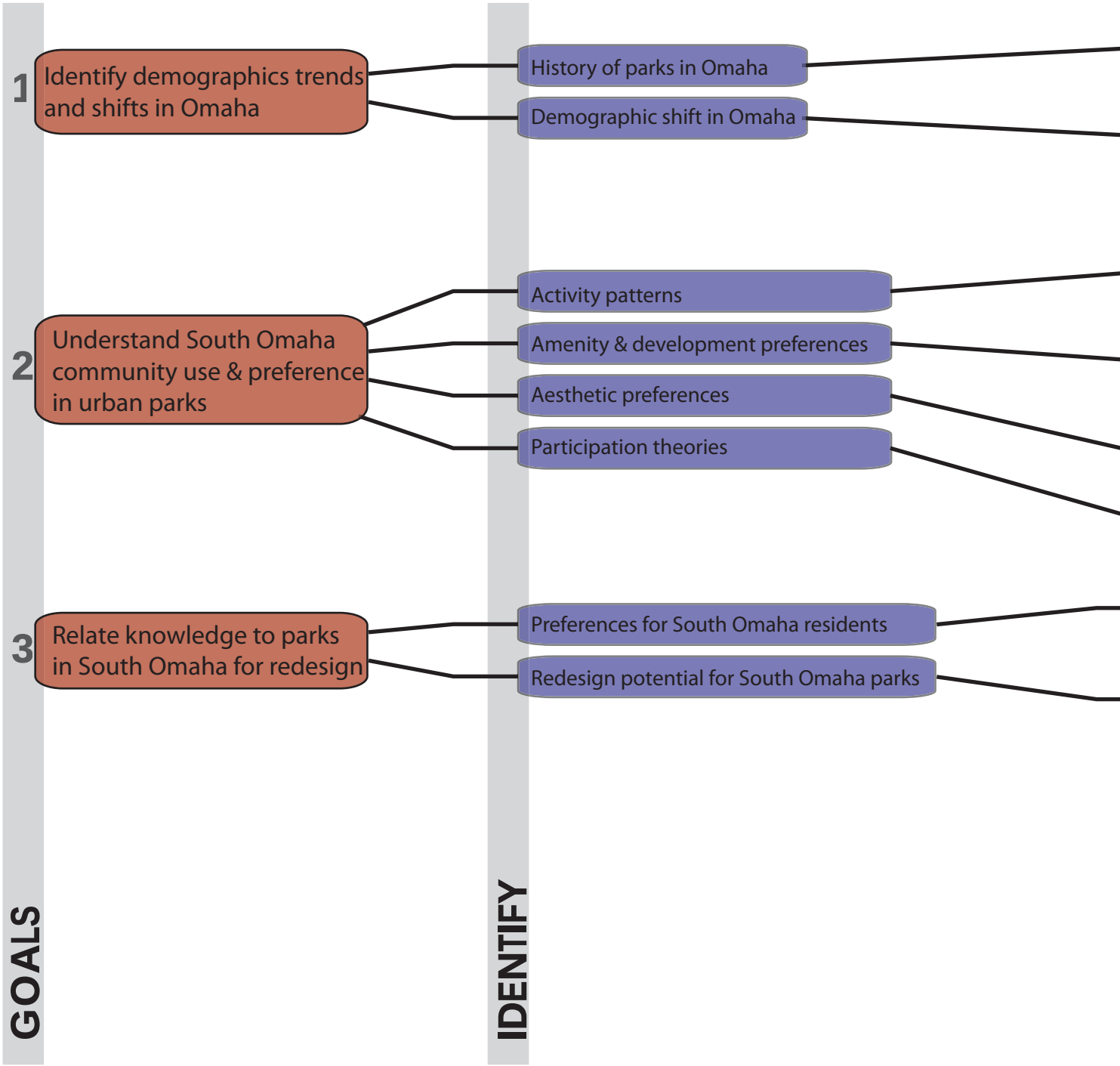
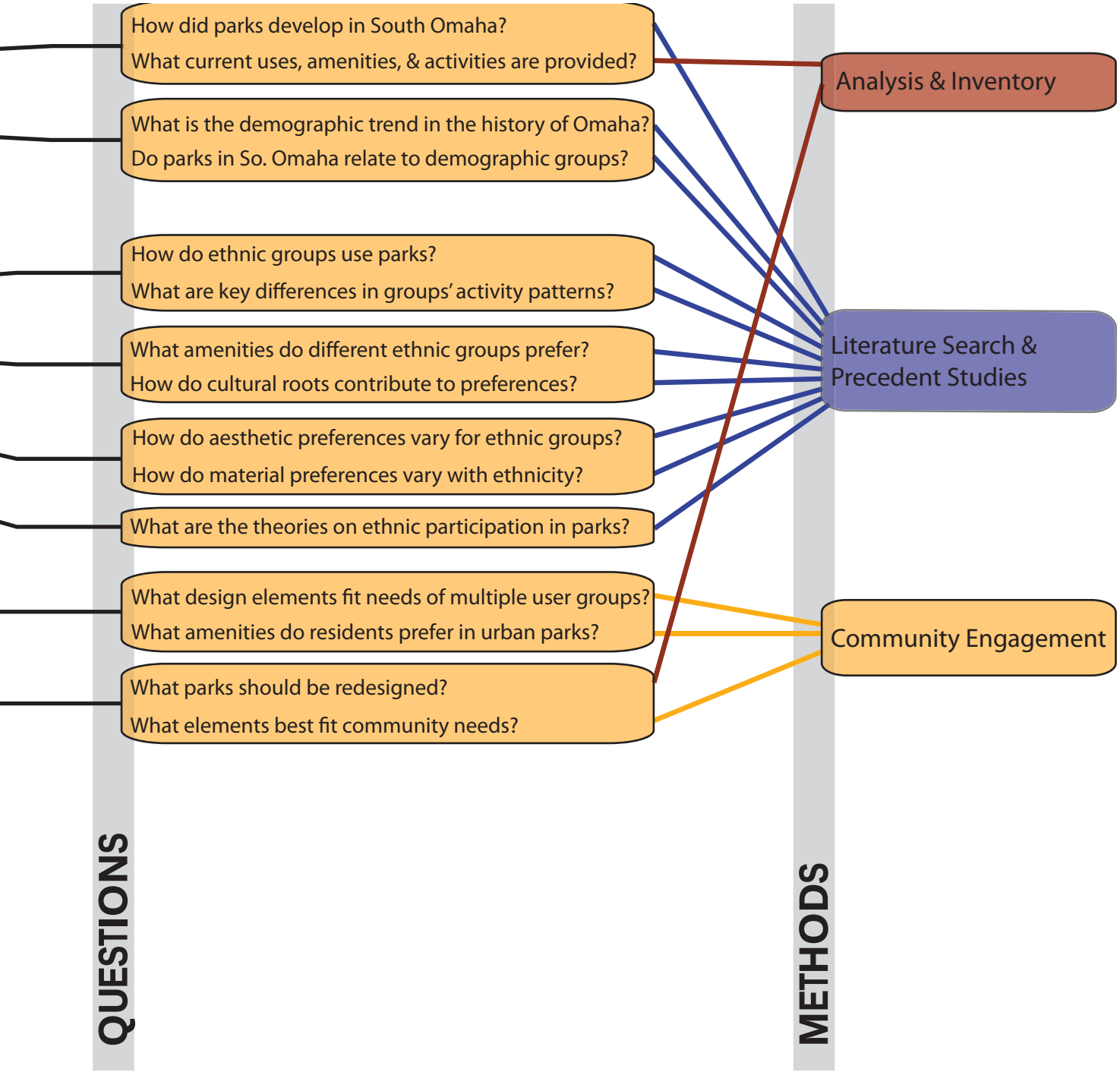


Figure 1.4 Project goals diagram. By author


How did parks develop in South Omaha?
What current uses, amenities, & activities are provided?
What is the demographic trend in the history of Omaha?
Do parks in So. Omaha relate to demographic groups?
How do ethnic groups use parks?
What are key differences in groups' activity patterns?
What amenities do different ethnic groups prefer?
How do cultural roots contribute to preferences?
How do aesthetic preferences vary for ethnic groups?
How do material preferences vary with ethnicity?
What are the theories on ethnic participation in parks?
What design elements fit needs of multiple user groups?
What amenities do residents prefer in urban parks?
What parks should be redesigned?
What elements best fit community needs?
QUESTIONS
Analysis & Inventory
Literature Search & Precedent Studies
Community Engagement
METHODS

Boundaries and Location

Figure 1.5 illustrates the range of physical boundaries in this research project. Each scale served a specific purpose to help accomplish a particular task. The primary, the primary interest was to analyze the South Omaha ethnic group's leisure style preferences in urban parks to inform a list of design considerations and the conceptual redesigns of Lynch Park and Spring Lake Park. Therefore, research focused on literature and precedent projects that furthered understanding of ethnic groups' recreational preferences, patterns, and utilization of amenities in urban parks. It was not the intent to investigate resident underutilization in parks.

Research into current conditions included the development and demographics of South Omaha. Interviews with the neighborhood, community, and cultural organization leaders and the Omaha Parks and Recreation Department were primary sources for resident leisure styles, Omaha history and park development, and demographic trends.

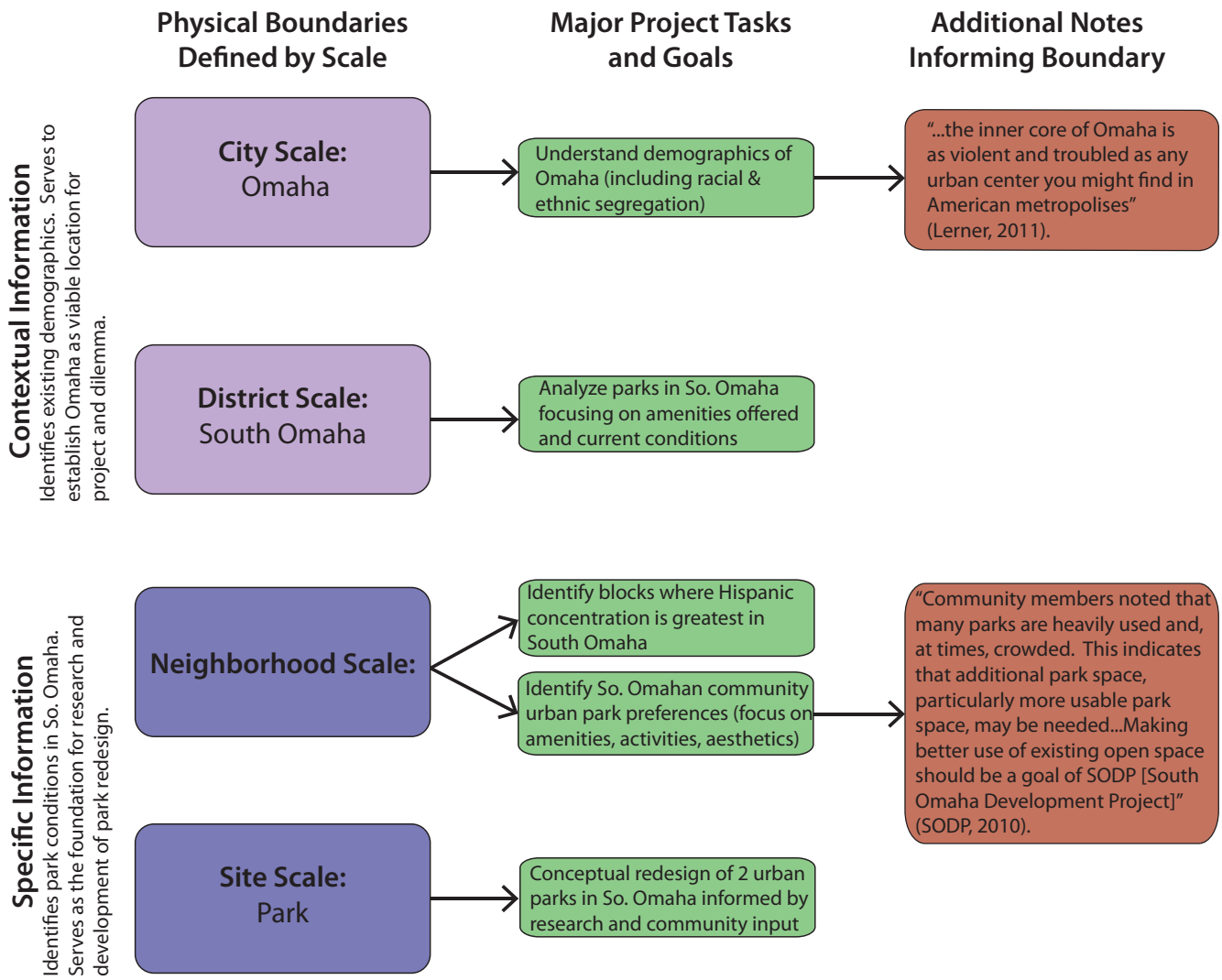


Figure 1.5 Project Boundaries and Location. By Author

Relevance to Landscape Architecture

People often describe the United States as a 'melting pot' referring to the plethora of ethnic groups that composes the country's population. The growth rate of ethnic diversity is skyrocketing, largely due to international migration (McDonnell-Smith, n.d.). According to the U.S. Census Bureau, Asian Americans and Hispanic Americans were the first and second fastest growing ethnic groups in 2012 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2013). In Omaha, Nebraska, Hispanic Americans are the fastest growing ethnic group (Chamber of Commerce, 2006).

Understanding the changing demographics of the United States is important for the design industry, and landscape architecture in particular. Landscape architects have the skills and knowledge to mediate between community members and project teams, stakeholders and professionals, and disciplines. As the communities and stakeholders change, so must design decisions and solutions by landscape architects. A critical piece in design, particularly of public spaces such as urban parks, is responding to the user group. Cut and paste design may not adequately provide people with meaningful spaces they want to occupy and return to. Successful urban parks promote place attachment, a highly researched theory that considers the "bonding of people to places" (Altman & Low, 1992). Place attachment incorporates elements of responding to the user group, and satisfying individuals' inherent needs and desires in physical space. Urban parks can and should inspire place attachment.

Many landscape architects focus on design of public open space, some specifically on park design. Parks can define a community, provide socioeconomic benefits, and improve city appearances. As the United States demographic becomes more varied, park design must change as well. I strive to highlight and respond to the demographic shift in my research. Through identifying a specific area (South Omaha) with a varied cultural community, including a large population of one ethnicity (Hispanic American), I aim to respond to the residents while maintaining flexible use for all users. I hope that design students and

professionals utilize my project as an example and framework to approach urban park design in cities with unique cultural demographics or when designing internationally.

CHAPTER 2

BACKGROUND

Introduction

Background knowledge was necessary to provide insight into the recreation preferences and patterns of ethnic groups, establish design criteria that reflects the needs and desires of the residents in South Omaha, and guide questions for community interviews. The first section of this chapter describes the United States' and Omaha, Nebraska's park and green space development and why parks were originally established. The second part defines ethnicity and presents leading theories on ethnic group participation, perceptions, and use patterns in parks. The final section discusses ethnic group recreation preferences and patterns in urban spaces from research conducted, largely in the United States. The glossary in the appendices further defines key terms and concepts related to the project.

Urban Parks Past and Present

Urban parks have served people since Frederick Law Olmsted and Calvert Vaux first designed New York's Central Park in the mid-1800s. It was believed that a public park would provide relief to the crowded, dirty, and polluted city (Cranz & Boland, 2004). Olmsted and Vaux developed a plan to create a 700-acre park that would serve New Yorkers. The park opened in 1857 and has since become one of the United States' most famous parks (Blackmar & Rosenzweig, 2004).

Although park design types have transformed from the mid-1800s, the innate human need for urban green space has not changed. Traditionally, American urban park designers have not usually employed extensive community involvement to inform design. Instead, designers may "throw together a hodgepodge of elements" because they do not consider what is most appropriate to the context and community (Cranz, 1982). Four park typologies followed the general rule of not involving extensive community engagement: the Pleasure Ground (1850-1900), the Reform Park (1900-1930), the Recreation Facility (1930-1965), and the Open Space System (1965 on) (Cranz & Boland, 2004). The most recent park typology, the Sustainable Park, places an emphasis on the community in a different way than the previous four park typologies. Cranz and Boland (2004, pp. 117-118) state, "Because Sustainable Parks involve the community broadly and in a myriad of ways, they are no longer the specialized domain of experts and managers. Community involvement necessarily brings a different set of form-giving forces to bear on park design and management, suggesting that the idea of a developmental or evolutionary aesthetic has enormous social application."

Cranz and Boland advocate for flexible park design because parks that can adapt to different users, demographic groups, and a changing context have a greater chance of success than parks that cannot. This flexibility can manifest itself in physical amenities provided, activities hosted, and spaces designed within the park. One major consideration that should determine features and spatial organization are the people who currently use the park as well as future users.

To design for the largest number of people possible, many designers employ a democratic design method, meaning that a design would examine the user groups of a site, finds the majority, and primarily responds to the needs and desires of that dominant group (Cranz, 1982). A designer who uses the democratic design method risks ignoring or forgetting other populations such as ethnic minority groups. In addition, designers often pull from their own experiences and perceptions of space to drive design decisions as much as they do from research. Because people from ethnic minority backgrounds are rarely represented in professional fields in design and management, designers can suffer from design "color blindness" (Rishbeth, 2001, p. 351).

Omaha History and Development

South Omaha and Omaha developed as separate cities until 1915. Omaha, the largest city in Nebraska, is located on the eastern boarder of the state, as seen in Figure 1.1. South Omaha arose from the stockyard and meat packinghouse industries. Because of Omaha's adjacency to the Missouri River and central location between Chicago and Texas, the city was well placed to act as a shipping hub for cattle and other livestock. Railroad companies also took advantage of economic opportunities to serve the livestock industry. As many as seven companies located train stops in Omaha, hugely shaping the city when Omaha annexed South Omaha. The industry thrived until the mid-1950s when it declined sharply (Ganzel, 2007).

Labor needs created through agri-business brought large populations of ethnic minority groups to South Omaha. A historian noted "no doubt that Omaha qualified as an 'immigrant city.'" (Mead & Hunt Inc, 2005), because the percentage of foreign-born people in Omaha outnumbered other larger cities in the United States. Early immigrant groups included people with German, Irish, Scandinavian, British, Italian, Polish, Bohemian, and Russian ethnic backgrounds (Mead & Hunt Inc, 2005). However, throughout the 1900s, the Hispanic community grew to become dominant, and European ethnic groups decreased. Many workers traveled from Mexico and Central America to serve the meatpacking industry and thus created a demographic shift in South Omaha. (Mead & Hunt Inc, 2005). The Hispanic American community continutes to be the major ethnic group represented in South Omaha today.

As population grew, the city developed public spaces. Parks were among the most deliberately planned. Omaha was one of the first cities to implement a Park Board, which was established in 1889 (City of Omaha, 1982). Horace Cleveland's design of the comprehensive park system became a critical foundation through the pre- and post- World War II eras. Cleveland's view that parks were an "integral portion of the city, instead of being merely appendages," similar to Olmsted and Vaux's opinions, defined the Omaha urban park

system (City of Omaha, 1982). Parks continued to develop as areas of respite, and became even more important with the high concentration of packinghouses and stockyards.

Nineteenth century parks in South Omaha developed in part to respond to ethnic minority groups and their growing interest in sports. For example, a park in a Czech-dominated neighborhood integrated a dancing stage and baseball field, which aligned with the park preferences and recreation needs of that population (City of Omaha, 1982).
While South Omaha was comprised largely of European ethnic groups throughout the 1800s, parks provided amenities that reflected those residents' preferences. However, since the beginning of the 21st century the ethnic demographic majority shifted toward Hispanic. Hispanic American is the largest and quickest growing minority group in Omaha which adds significantly to the changing demographic in Nebraska's largest city. The U.S. Census Bureau estimates that the 2013 Hispanic American population was 56,900 people, 13.1% of Omaha's total population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2014), with most of that growth occuring in South Omaha (Chamber of Commerce, 2006).
As the city's demographics change, a re-examination of parks must occur to identify whether the open spaces still fulfill the users' preferences and recreation patterns.

Ethnicity and Its Significance

People often mistakenly use the terms ethnicity and race as synonyms. Although they are both social constructions, they are generally constructed differently. In the United States, ethnicity typically relates to culture, and is an identity that a person herself asserts. A person can choose their ethnicity to a degree or identify with multiple ethnicities (Conley, Cheng, Freund, & Cho, 2003). Ethnicity indicates an identity with which a person is familiar. Ethnic groups share common roots in language, values, traditions, or genealogy (Conley et al., 2003). People often associate nationality with ethnicity.

Race is also a social construction as ethnicity is. Through the process of racialization in the United States, physical features with no inherent meaning have been arbitrarily chosen to mark people for differential treatment. Race is arbitrary, neither categories nor markers are predicted by biological factors (Cornell & Hartmann, 2007). It is also often imposed on people. Whereas ethnicity is a cultural identity that people themselves assert and identify with, race is often assigned. Finally, it must be emphasized that race is a social, not a biological, category, and the way that people define "race" varies by culture.

Ethnicity and race are both subject to transformation through time. As perceptions and laws change, views of ethnic and racial groups shift (Conley et al., 2003). Since both race and ethnicity are social constructions, they will be defined differently across time and space. The U.S. Census Bureau classifies Hispanic Americans as an ethnic group, separate from race, but in the past, the census considered Hispanic American a race and grouped it within the race section (U.S. Census Bureau, 2014).

As individuals identify with different ethnic groups, ethnic majority and ethnic minority groups are defined. An ethnic majority group is the dominant culture in a defined area. Conversely, an ethnic minority group is a "subcultural group [membership] on the basis of country of origin, language, religion, or cultural traditions different from the dominant

society" (Gramann, 1996, p. 3). Additionally, Chaiklin defines ethnic minorities are "groups of people who differ in…national, religious, or cultural origin from the dominant group—often the majority population—of the country in which they live" (2014, para. 1). Researchers delve beyond the superficial definition of the term "ethnic minority group." Sasidharan, Willits, and Godbey note that ethnic minority groups as often "subordinate groups [that] 'are in conflict over scarce resources, which may relate to power, favorable occupational position, [and] educational opportunity'" (2005, p. 20). Beyond occupation and education, relative to this research topic, access to urban parks and are considered additional scarce resources.

Within my report, several terms are used to indicate certain ethnic groups: European American for individuals of European descent, Asian American for people with cultural roots in Asia, African American indicating people of African descent, or Hispanic American for people with ancestral roots in Hispanic countries in Latin and South America. The terms describing ethnic groups are not meant to ignore or generalize sub-ethnic groups but to maintain clarity of writing and understanding throughout the project.

Ethnic Group Participation in Urban Parks

As Olmsted, Vaux, and Cleveland believed, parks are integral to the development of a city and provide important benefits to society, such as opportunities for recreation, relaxation, and community building. Therefore, parks should provide for the activities and preferences of their user groups.

Some ethnic minority groups are quickly growing in the United States, particularly Asian American and Hispanic American. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the Asian American population increased by 2.9% and Hispanic American growth was about 2.2% in the 2010 census. Hispanic Americans remain the second largest ethnicity at 17% of the United States population, about 54.3 million people (McDonnell-Smith, 2014). With such a quickly changing demographic, design must shift to accommodate these populations, particularly as research continues to show that ethnic groups use spaces differently such as urban parks. A physical design that responds to user preferences can lead to increased participation in the urban park (Rishbeth, 2001).

Ethnic Participation Theory

Ethnic participation theory strives to explain participation differences between ethnic minority groups for urban parks and open space. Researchers believe that identifying leisure style patterns of ethnic minority groups will provide a better understanding of participation rates (Carr & Williams, 1993). For landscape architects, this information is important when designing spaces where ethnic minority groups are present. Researchers discuss a number of different ideas on participation including class identification theory, multiple hierarchy stratification theory, and class polarization theory (Sasidharan et al., 2005). Debora Chavez (2001) identifies compensation theory, hypothesizing that minorities recreate more to make up for disadvantages felt in other areas of society. However, two concepts that continually arise are the marginality and ethnicity theories (Carr & Williams, 1993; Sasidharan et al., 2005).

Marginality theory explains potential under-participation of ethnic minority groups

relating to low socioeconomic status, lack of access to desired facilities, and discrimination (Carr & Williams, 1993; Rishbeth, 2001). The theory highlights economic limitations of ethnic minority groups and problems in society, including the still present issue of prejudice (Sasidharan et al., 2005). Within this frame of thought, ethnic minority groups are marginalized from the larger society and potentially forgotten or ignored as a part of the design and planning process. Democratic design, design that is directed toward the majority user group of a particular space, risks excluding increasingly growing ethnic minority groups in the United States (Rishbeth, 2001).

One limitation of marginality theory is that it stereotypes ethnic minority groups' lifestyles, particularly groups from Asia. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the average Caucasian non-Hispanic American in the United States holds a net worth of $113,822. The average Asian American banks a net worth of $107,690, a slight decrease from European American compared to the next group, Hispanic Americans with an average net worth of $13,375 (Kent, 2010). Although socioeconomic status involves more than net worth, this example points out the risk of generalizing ethnic minority groups into one category.

Ethnicity theory discusses cultural norms and values as the major factor in ethnic group participation in urban parks and open space (Carr and Williams, 1993). As people immigrate into the United States, they bring the values, practices, and lifestyles of their ancestral countries, presenting a mosaic of backgrounds that drive preferences for activity and amenities in parks.

The ethnicity theory is also not without its weaknesses. Often, the ethnicity theory generalizes ethnic groups as a homogenous entity (Gramann, 1996). For example, "Hispanic" often refers to any individual from a Spanish speaking country. However, intra-ethnic groups such as Cuban American, Mexican American, or Spanish American, are as likely to vary in urban park preferences, values, and expectations as intra-ethnic groups (Carr & Williams, 1993).

Researchers note that recreation resources, focusing on ethnicity theory, should reflect diverse ethnic preferences (Gramann, 1996).

Despite arguments against the theories, both marginality and ethnicity present substantiated concepts that attempt to simplify a complex social occurrence of ethnic minority group participation in urban parks and open space. Research supports the theories' claims noting, "A consistent finding of several studies that examined the marginality/ethnicity framework is that ethnic differences in participation rates remain even when socio-economic factors are held consistent" (Carr & Williams, 1993). Therefore, participation differences between ethnicities still occurs when socioeconomic variables are controlled (Gramann, 1996). The research within this project considered ethnicity theory as an underlaying participation pattern assumption, and assumed that research into cultural roots and values could be used to help explain and make design decisions.

Ethnic Group Urban Park Preferences

Ethnic groups exhibit a varied range of urban park preferences spatially, socially, and programmatically. Across leisure study research, consistent findings indicate that ethnic groups use urban parks in ways that reveal a cultural identity, requiring different amenities and spaces. However, cultural assimilation is often highlighted as an argument against ethnicity influencing recreation patterns and ethnicity theory. Many researchers argue that as ethnic groups become more integrated into the Anglo-American lifestyle, coined Anglo-conformity, acculturation persists, causing preferences and behaviors to change. Ethnic groups progressively lose their cultural roots and adopt Anglo-Americans preferences. However, in cases where ethnic groups illustrate core values of familism, Anglo-conformity is less influential (Gramann, 1996). Greater importance in family values often relates to stronger family-related recreation patterns and perceived benefits from family-oriented recreation (Shaull & Gramann, 1998). Acculturation is a consistent problem, but encouraging ethnic groups to maintain and practice their culture by providing park space that allows them to recreate accordingly may begin to break down the Anglo-conformity pattern and preserve the unique cultures that immigrants to the United States hold.

Topics that are typically studied across ethnic populations involve park social group dynamics, recreation activity participation, facility and amenity use, park aesthetic preferences, and visitation patterns. Other considerations are park maintenance and safety concerns (including discrimination) (H. Tinsley, D. Tinsley, & Croskeys, 2002; Sasidharan et al., 2005; Rishbeth, 2001; Payne, Mowen, & Orsega-Smith, 2002; Gobster, 2002; Carr & Williams, 1993).

Social Group Composition

One of the clearest distinctions between ethnic groups in leisure recreation is social group composition in urban parks. People attend, recreate, and participate in parks in ways that speak to their cultural roots. European Americans tend to use parks individually or in small groups of no more than two or three people. Conversely,

Figure 2.1 Large group composition.
By Author

Figure 2.2 Small group composition
By Dave Shankbone

Hispanic Americans and Asian Americans tend to congregate in larger groups of five to seven people or more (Carr & Williams, 1993; Gramann, 1996). Ethnicity theory can provide a reason for this pattern.

The family is central to many cultures, but it is so important to the Hispanic Americans and Asian Americans that it can affect recreation patterns. Nuclear members (father, mother, and siblings) and extended members (grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins) often join at urban parks to spend time together (Chavez, 2001; Gobster, 2002; Carr & Williams, 1993; Gramann, 1996). Compared to a home, the larger space available in a park supports larger social gatherings. Additionally, Hispanic American families said that visits to natural areas enhanced their closeness to family members (Chavez, 1996). Therefore, urban parks can become an important space to preserve and express cultural values (Gramann, 1996). Because family ties are so inherent to ethnicity, distinctions can be identified with comparing with cultures (Carr & Williams, 1993).

Recreation Preferences and Considerations

Parks serve as locations for both passive recreation and active recreation. According to the Environmental Protection Agency, passive recreation "refers to recreational activities that do not require prepared facilities like sports fields or pavilions" and active recreation "refers to a structured individual or team activity that requires the use of special facilities, courses, fields, or equipment" (n.d.). In this section, active and passive recreation preferences are examined in four categories: sports and exercise, water activities, picnicking, and relaxation. Three additional participation considerations, education, religion, and culture conclude the chapter. It is important to note that information discussed is synthesized from several sources, and is not indicative of all ethnic groups in the United States.

Sports and Exercise

Sports are a popular form of active recreation for people in parks. Individual and group sports each require different equipment and playing fields, so park designers must prioritize which sports to offer or design flexible spaces that can serve multiple sports. Realizing that some ethnic groups gravitate toward specific sports can help determine what fields or courts are most important to include. Hispanic Americans tend to prefer group sports to individual sports, soccer being most prevalent (Gobster, 2002; Chavez, Baas, & Winter, 1993). They also often enjoy watching organized group sports. African Americans, similar to Hispanic Americans, favor group sports, but place basketball as the highest priority. Asian Americans bridge the gap between group and individual sports by tending to enjoy both volleyball, a group sport, and golf, an individual sport. European Americans tend to prefer individual sports such as golf, tennis, or game playing (Gobster, 2002). Although most ethnic groups favor exercise in parks, patterns follow the same group and individual patterns as sports. European Americans prefer individual exercising such as walking, jogging, or hiking (Chavez, 2001; Chavez et al., 1993).

Figure 2.3 Pick-up soccer game.
By Glen Jarrett

Figure 2.4 Popular water activity.
By Nevit Dilmen

Water Activities

Hispanic Americans are unique in their strong preference for water activities. Because many Hispanic American countries are located in warmer climates, water is often a respite and highly valued among activities in natural environments (Chavez, 1996). Water can serve a second purpose aside from recreation. Water can be used in religious and cultural ceremonies, such as baptism. Those cultural ties are often thought to influence Hispanic American's water preferences, again alluding to ethnicity theory. Research shows a higher preference among this ethnicity for water in urban parks than other groups do (Gobster, 2001; Gramann, 1996). Additionally, pools and splash parks are often inexpensive to use and allow larger groups to use them. Demographic statistics show Hispanic Americans are less affluent than other ethnicities and have bigger families (Chavez, 2001). Therefore, many Hispanic Americans identify low cost recreation areas important (Chavez et al., 1993; Gobster, 2002).

Picnicking

Picnicking patterns are a widely studied topic for many ethnic groups because many groups picnic and demonstrate distinct patterns in how they utilize park amenities and picnicking space. Hispanic Americans and Asian Americans picnic more often than African Americans and European Americans. Hispanic Americans tend to picnic with large groups of ten or more with immediate and extended family involved, and they enjoy talking to and meeting new people (Gobster, 2002; Chavez, 2001; Chavez et al., 1993; Gramann, 1996). Because face to face interaction is Hispanic Americans' preferred method of communication (Gramann, 1996), opportunities for social interaction ranks highly in value. Asian Americans also picnic in groups with immediate and extended family and value social interaction on a lesser scale (Gramann, 1996). African Americans and European Americans exhibit dissimilar picnic patterns to Hispanic Americans and Asian Americans. When they did picnic, it was more often in small groups and less frequent.

Figure 2.5 Large picnic. By Author

Additionally, food distinguishes ethnic groups. The level of food involvement and preparation varies as well as food types served. While most ethnic groups integrate food with picnics, Hispanic Americans are noted as turning picnics into all day events (Chavez, 1996). Often, they prepare food at the park and cook throughout the day. Open buffet style is a typical distribution method with a variety of foods. Chavez (1996) conducted a survey and found that the most common foods were barbecue hens or chicken, carne asada (beef dish), tortillas, salsa, guacamole, and watermelon. Asian Americans also typically involve food with picnics and prefer homemade. However, they tend to prepare food beforehand and transport the food to the site (Chavez, 2001) and favor Asian American style dishes including rice and meats with sauces. European Americans integrate food into picnics differently. This ethnic group often brings pre-prepared food that is not homemade and favor "American" style food such as hot dogs, hamburgers, salads, and potato chips (Chavez, 1996).

Relaxation and Nature

Relaxation and nature viewing preferences blur between ethnic groups more than sports and exercise, water activities, and picnicking. Most ethnic groups observed enjoy nature and relaxation within urban parks. Gobster (2002 p. 148), in his research, notes that Hispanic Americans enjoy "taking fresh air." Chavez et al. (1993) record in their work that "relaxing" is highly valued across all ethnic groups studied. Of the Hispanic American families interviewed in a second study by Chavez (1996), relaxing and napping are among the most important activities in natural environments. The favorable view of relaxation and nature can relate back to a primary purpose of parks as a natural vegetative respite from the city. Hispanic Americans also note that the natural environment is the most important setting for leisure in their lives (Chavez, 1996). However, regardless of ethnicity, natural and comfortable environments provide the foundation for activity within parks.

Figure 2.6 Cinco de Mayo Festival.
By dbking

Education

Educational opportunities within public spaces can teach people about a variety of topics from history to environmental processes to societal benefits. Gramann (1996) notes in his report that Hispanic Americans were more likely to take trips to archaeological and historically significant places. Additionally, Hispanic Americans have noted that informative signage and spaces are of value, particularly about nature (Chavez et al., 1993; Chavez, 2001). Conversely, European Americans favor printed media such as pamphlets over signage (Chavez et al., 1993). Hispanic Americans state that they desire cultural centers in public spaces to both learn about their own culture and share their heritage with others (Hassan, 2014). For immigrants relocating and citizens already living in the United States, learning opportunities to learn can enhance the benefits of urban parks. Parks can become multi-cultural learning hubs where people can share their cultural heritages, festivals, and holidays while learning about others' backgrounds. Increased community bonding through education could contribute to greater acceptance and fewer cases of discrimination and prejudice, particularly in areas with large ethnic minority groups or areas with a wide range of ethnicities.

Religion and Culture

Hispanic Americans are the primary ethnicity researched when discussing urban parks in a religious and cultural context. Culturally, parks offer community space to hold major events important to Hispanic American holidays such as Carnival in March or April, Cinco de Mayo in May, or Dia de los Muertos in November (University of California, n.d.). In addition to festivals, opportunities to commemorate other countries' major historical events or milestones can encourage use, educate the public on a different ethnicity, and preserve an ethnic groups' cultural identity. Constructing statues or memorials for independence days or important historical figures allows people to connect back to their ethnic roots and preserve cultural identity. Urban parks can easily become public space that celebrates United States' diversity.

Because holidays and historical events are important to many cultures and rely on celebrating together, large spaces that support a variety of events becomes critical. Many urban parks already host national and local cultural festivals and celebrations. The nation's largest celebrations in cities and regions with large Hispanic American populations host culturally focused events, such as New York City's annual parade in honor of Puerto Rico residents in the United States, attracting more than 80,000 participants and two million spectators (Sanchez, 2011).

An additional example is at Linn Park in Birmingham which hosts Alabama's largest Hispanic American Festival: Fiesta Birmingham drawing statewide visitors. Fiesta Birmingham adds an educational component to their celebration to teach the public about the different Hispanic American countries and their cultures through music, food, and dance (City of Birmingham, 2014). For example at a local level, National City, California hosts a Dia de los Muertos festival. The celebration incorporates Hispanic traditions like altar building (a way to commemorate deceased family members), vigils, dance rituals, and grave site decorations (Gutierrez, 2014). Communities with large ethnic populations can utilize urban parks to hosts cultural events, requiring specific features such as large open space, places to cook food, or paved patios for traditional dances.

The appendix includes a list of major Latin American and United States holidays.

Visitation Patterns and Influences

Length of Visit

Activity largely dictates the amount of time people spend in parks. Because many European Americans visit parks in smaller groups and often for exercise or relaxing purposes, their visits do not typically last longer than one or two hours. Hispanic Americans' visits, which often involve group activities, sports, and food, last longer than European Americans', sometimes upwards of four hours long (Chavez, 1996). Length of visit can influence design considerations when programming an urban park. Parks located in areas with ethnic groups that tend to congregate and spend longer periods visiting, the amount of gathering space required increases. Parks located in areas where the user population prefers small group activity for shorter periods, gathering space is smaller but perhaps the trails and sidewalk system expands.

Visitor Age

Aside from ethnicity, age is a primary determinant for park participation and patterns (Gramann, 1996). Children desire playgrounds where elderly people prefer benches for bird or people watching. Teenagers desire skate parks, but young adults prefer spaces for socializing (Gramann, 1996). With the shifting ethnic demographic in the Unites States, designers need to monitor the changing age demographics. Age trends indicate participation rates as increasing in bird-watching, hunting, hiking, camping, walking for pleasure, and picnicking because a majority of the United States' population falls into the age range that prefers these types of activities (Gramann, 1996).

Visitation Considerations

Safety

Safety in urban parks concerns designers, managers, and users alike. Underutilized and unmaintained parks encourage more crime and dangerous conditions. While safety considerations include more factors than ethnicity (such as age or socioeconomic status), ethnic groups are a factor, particularly for minority groups. Although United States governmental law provides the same rights for all races and ethnicities, prejudice remains. Perceived discrimination by ethnic minority groups influences visitation and participation patterns. Minority ethnic groups consistently identify discrimination mitigation measures as an important value and need in park design (Chavez et al., 1993; Carr & Williams, 1993; Gobster, 2002; Gramann, 1996). In research, Hispanic Americans identified more often than European Americans to perceive themselves as targets for discrimination (Chicago Park District, 1995; Gramann, 1996).

Ethnic minority groups tend to determine what parts of parks they use because of perceived discrimination (Gramann, 1996). Often, minority groups gather within sight of other members of the same ethnicity to add a level of safety (Gobster, 2002). However, ethnic minority groups' concern for safety varies with regard to law enforcement at parks. Some minorities welcome law or park staff presence at the park (Chavez et al., 1993; Carr & Williams, 1993; Gobster, 2002). Conversely, other ethnic groups feel the strongest prejudice from law enforcement and park staff (Gramann, 1996). Geographic location and context influences opinions for ethnic minority groups and park staff.

Site Development, Amenities, and Aesthetics

Park development preferences, specifically intensity of programming and inclusion of amenities, differs among ethnic groups. European Americans prefer parks that show little human interference and favor nature to site amenity provisions. Hispanic Americans prefer more developed parks with several site amenities that are easily accessible by walking or mass transit (Gobster, 2002). Specifically, Hispanic

Figure 2.7 Prospect Park. By Erik Cleves Kristensen

Figure 2.8 Park activities. By Tyler Johnson

Americans consistently note garbage disposal, toilets, parking, and areas to cook and reheat food as important park features (Chavez, 2001; Chavez et al., 1993; Gramann, 1996). Spaces promoting high levels of social interaction, such as areas with picnic table clusters, draw Hispanic Americans who congregate in groups and enjoy meeting new people (Gramann, 1996; Gobster, 2002).

Ethnic groups can inform aesthetic preferences in addition to site development and amenities. Because Hispanic Americans often prefer more intense development and a greater amount of site features, they also value a manicured and maintained aesthetics in urban parks. Hispanic Americans describe the ideal park landscape as "peopled and productive." This productive mindset may originate from cultural roots, where Hispanic American settlers in the New World viewed the land as a means for sustenance (Gramann, 1996). Conversely, European Americans, with their preferences toward a landscape largely unaffected by human activity, tend to view parks as a "beautiful area" and desire a naturalistic aesthetic (Chavez et al., 1993).

Chapter Summary

Park design types have altered since Olmsted and Vaux designed Central Park for residents of New York City. The current park type, the Sustainable Park, encourages designers to incorporate community preferences into flexible spaces that fit a variety of needs. However, throughout the history of park development, parks' importance has only increased. Horace Cleveland, in Omaha, Nebraska, began to deliberately develop a series of parks and greenways through the city. While parks in South Omaha originally catered to the dominant demographic of the area, as the meatpacking and livestock industry grew, the population shifted from a European American majority to one dominated by Hispanic Americans. Therefore, parks that previously fit the needs of residents no longer served the ethnic diversity of the area.

Ethnic groups vary in participation patterns, activities, and preferences in urban parks. Several theories aim to explain differences in leisure recreation, but marginality and ethnicity theories remain most prominent. One similarity between the theories is that when socioeconomic variables are constant, differences still arise with recreation participation and preferences. For the purposes of this study, the ethnicity theory, which explains that participation variances result from cultural norms and values, frames the theoretical focus for the Hispanic American community in South Omaha.

"Anglo-conformity" or assimilation into the Western culture is a potential challenge to avoid in gearing design toward a particular ethnic group. Research argues both that recreation preferences change and do not change with assimilation. Additionally, urban parks that promote ethnic groups maintaining and practicing their culture publicly encourages education and acceptance among communities. Urban parks also serve to commemorate major historical events for a variety of cultures, creating a park that celebrates multi-cultural diversity.

Urban parks, particularly those in areas with high ethnic group concentrations, require a flexible range of programmatic elements to satisfy

varied user needs. Research reveals unique patterns among ethnic groups, beginning with the social composition of the recreation group. For example, Hispanic Americans and Asian Americans tend to gather in large numbers composed of immediate and extended family. They gather for various reasons in parks including cultural or religious festivals, sports, picnics, and relaxation. Food is often an important activity and contributes to longer visitation periods. With food's involvement, site features such as trash receptacles, grill pits, and picnic tables cater to visitor needs. Beyond picnicking and food, ethnic groups show unique patterns in water activities, sports, and educational aspects. Considerations for religion, cultural events, and safety also influence park preferences. Hispanic Americans tend to prefer developed parks with many amenities, while European Americans tend to enjoy natural, untouched parkland. Site development preferences influence aesthetics and safety perceptions, including discrimination. Clean and non-littered spaces that promote social interaction are culturally and aesthetically important for all ethnic groups.

CHAPTER 3

METHODS

Introduction

Qualitative and quantitative methods were used in this research project. A four-part methodology including background literature review, precedent studies, community interviews, and site inventory and analysis contributed to the development of the design goals, objectives, and redesign concepts. This chapter discusses each of the methods, their role in answering the initial research question, and guiding the design considerations and concepts.

Methods Overview

The project addressed research through both quantitative and qualitative lenses. Quantitative methods including site analysis, determined which sites were selected for conceptual redesign. South Omaha has 32 urban parks of varying acreage. Two parks were identified for redesign. Qualitative methods provided a foundational body of knowledge that helped me develop interview questions posed within the community engagement processes. Qualitative information acted as one foundation for design decisions by providing a broad understanding of ethnic group preferences and patterns in urban parks and of existing parks conditions in South Omaha, which grounded the quantitative information gathered in interviews. Both quantitative and qualitative information established design considerations that were responded to at the two park sites. Figure 3.1 illustrates the methodology.

There were three project goals: to identify demographic shifts and trends in Omaha, to understand South Omaha community use and preference in urban parks, and to apply this knowledge to parks in South Omaha for redesign. The goals ultimately served to answer the research question: *How can existing urban parks in South Omaha, an area with a diverse ethnic population, be redesigned to better suit the preferences of the cultural community and still maintain flexible use?*

The project goals were further examined. Identifying items to be substantiated and asking key questions provided a valid platform to inform design and establish conclusions. Four core methods were utilized within the project: site analysis & inventory, literature search, precedent studies, and community engagement. The following sections further explain the methods.

Limited time was a key factor in completing this research project. The work plan was critical for understanding relationships, major tasks and meeting deadlines. Other considerations for the stopping procedure included the key questions and project goals highlighted within Figure 1.4. Once the researcher collected

findings through literature, precedents, site analysis, and community engagement, the project moved to production of final documentation. Conversations with the supervisory committee members, particularly the major advisor, provided me with feedback throughout the project that aided progress toward final documentation.

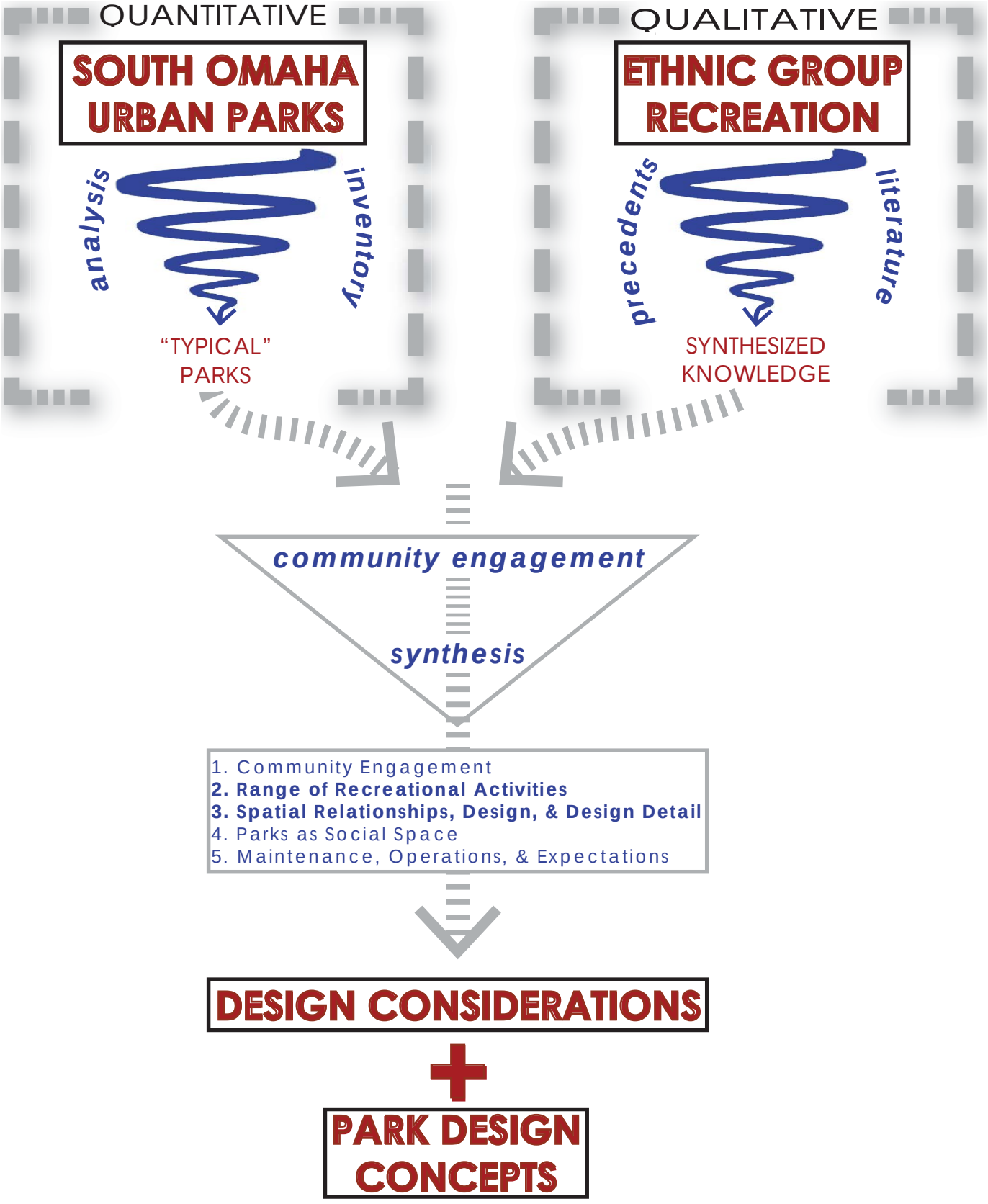


Figure 3.1 Methodology Diagram.
By Author

Analysis and Inventory

Analysis and Inventory encompassed a number of smaller research tasks including recording current urban park conditions, understanding South Omaha, and noting activities occurring within parks. Information gathered on South Omaha supplemented precedent studies of urban parks in the United States and Latin American countries to further understand park design for different cultures. Together, the data collected through site research and precedents created a solid understanding of South Omaha's parks, current demographics, and potential redesign opportunities and considerations.

Observation of urban parks in South Omaha occurred periodically during fall 2014 through early spring 2015. Deming and Swaffield (2011) noted in their text, *Landscape Architecture Research*, "observation can be a very efficient way to gain insight into the character, use, and performance of places already designed." Although winter months were not ideal for observation as park use was minimal, site visits informed a review of park layouts, contexts, and physical appearances, all valuable information for the project. Google Earth exploration and physical site visits were critical methods to note existing conditions and inventory what parks in South Omaha offered. Visits were preferred over Google Earth analysis; however, time, travel, and weather constraints dictated when this was possible. Several important features were visible in both Google Earth and site visits, so thoroughness of research did not suffer. Existing site images in South Omaha parks are located in the appendix.

In addition to noting current park conditions through sites visits, understanding the context of South Omaha was also critical. Therefore, mapping micro scale conditions illustrated spatial and social relationships. Deming and Swaffield (2011) define mapping as "the practice of interpretive readings of existing landscape—both as a means to understand the nondesign processes that produce landscape and to generate new forms and ideas."

Site inventory through site visits and Google Earth and site analysis through South Omaha

wide, or macroscale analysis, answered two key questions: "What current uses, amenities, and activities are provided?" and "What parks are candidates for redesign?" Inventory maps that showed race/ethnic group distribution, park locations, and barriers defined existing conditions. Overlays of maps, such as Omaha ethnic and race distribution and park location, spatially demonstrated what parks would have the highest impact to the South Omaha community through redesign. Synthesizing information in this method of inquiry, I identified two park sites in South Omaha to illustrate how design recommendations could be physically manifested. The parks included many common features, were close to the average park acreage of local South Omaha Parks, and were located within an area of an ethnic diverse population.

Parks that primarily served the immediate residents were important to this project. Parks visited by mostly non South Omaha residents may also benefit from redesign, but locally serving parks would best benefit residents. The two selected parks, Lynch Park and Spring Lake Park, were then examined at a site level, or micro scale which included existing site conditions, opportunities, and constraints. The micro level analysis diagrams included location, land use, transportation routes and walkability, topography and hydrology, access points and views, existing conditions, and opportunities and constraints.

Literature and Precedent Studies

The literature search and precedent studies were closely related. Literature provided background knowledge and principles on ethnic recreation patterns and preferences in urban parks. Key concepts, terms, and ideas derived from the literature guided further research and laid the foundation for precedent studies. Characteristics that were identified through the literature review as significant combined with discussions with committee members established a framework to identify and study suitable precedent studies.

Precedent study choice was influenced from desired outcomes from this method to help guide design and conclusions. Chapter 4: Precedents discusses the precedent study findings in detail. Each category had two or three precedents to provide substantial information. The first set of precedents fell under the category "Demographic Context and Park Design," which focused on public spaces whose location's demographics called for redesign or additional development. The precedents in this category were analyzed to understand how resident demographics affected urban parks in various ways including use, participation, and perception. "Demographic Context and Park Design" projects also highlighted how political and design organizations developed the project and handled varied stakeholder backgrounds, especially ethnicity. Understanding what measures were taken in the design process and the extent and type of community engagement informed project methods.

The second category was "Sites Based on Analysis of Ethnic Leisure Styles." Precedents in this category highlighted literature that described ethnic minority participation and preferences in the public space. These precedents served to show how recreation was studied and patterns recorded to help with interviews. Precedents with published research also illustrated what techniques were and were not successful in urban parks serving ethnic groups. Elements for the conceptual park design of South Omaha urban parks benefitted from knowledge gleaned within this group of precedents.

Last is the "Historic Park Design in Latin American Countries" section. These precedents which were culturally significant and located in Latin America, illustrated traditional park design in Hispanic cultures. Specific properties analyzed from the parks in this category included design form and geometry, spatial organization, social spaces, materials, amenities, and activities and events occurring in the parks. These parks were located in the home countries of South Omaha residents. This method provided a foundation for understanding Hispanic park and public space design in a variety of countries.

Demographic Context and Park Design

- Guadalupe Plaza Park, Houston TX
- Grand Park, Los Angeles CA
- Domino Park, Miami FL

Sites Based on Analysis of Ethnic Leisure Styles

- Lincoln Park, Chicago IL
- Mecca Hills Recreation Area, Palm Springs CA

Historic Park Design in Latin American Countries

- Central Alameda Park, Mexico City Mexico
- Parque Nacional, San Jose Costa Rica
- Parque Concordia, Guatemala City Guatemala

Community Engagement

Community engagement built literature review and precedent studies. Research and studies provided a strong foundation for informed design decisions, but incorporating input from the community created unique design solutions specifically for South Omaha residents. Community engagement included interviews with key informants, that is, "people who are well informed on the topic" (Deming & Swaffield, 2011). Key informants were identified by neighborhood alliances, cultural organizations, and community groups that functioned to some degree within South Omaha. One interviewee who was a part of the South Omaha Neighborhood Alliance, stated that they work to "enhance South Omaha neighborhoods through communication, community collaborations, empowering families, and promoting positive perceptions" and indicated this organization's potential willingness to aid with research.

The selection strategy targeted individuals who not only were park participants, but also were able to speak about the entire South Omaha community. In person (often in-park) conversations were guided from an informal question list helped provide an understanding of urban park preferences of South Omaha residents. Additionally, because the interviewees were often leaders in their communities. I was able to speak to groups at organized meetings in addition to individual conversations. Community leader interviews further helped me understand the community as a whole.

Interviewees were asked two sets of questions addressing the individual as a park participant and as a community leader. Individual participant questions asked about current urban park participation, activity participation, preferences, and amenity and aesthetic preferences.
The representative questions inquired into community wide preferences and desires for urban parks. Both sets of interview questions are in the appendix. If the interviewee was not available to participate in person, phone and email interviews took place.

The researcher strived to establish an open and unbiased atmosphere to avoid participants answering with what they believed was the "correct" answer. Because community interviews occurred near the end of the research process, the interviews were not intended to become a highly coded and statistical piece of evidence. Rather, interview responses confirmed research findings and provided important resident opinions, reflections and observations on South Omaha, urban parks, and recreation participation that quantitative research could not provide.

With the time and weather constraints of this research project, the interviews sought to understand an overview of resident participation and preferences from the standpoint of South Omaha representatives through neighborhood, cultural, community, and other organizational leaders. Future research could take interviews further, using similar questions and coding techniques to better understand individual residents' opinions and expand the research to include different ethnic groups, locations, and project types and number of interviews.

An IRB application, proposal number 7453, was submitted to the Kansas State University Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects/Institutional Review Board. The application was considered exempt. However, ethnical and privacy measures for interviewees still applied. The letter stating exemption is found in the appendix.

Chapter Summary

The research methods for this project were aimed at identifying a set of design considerations and concepts for Lynch Park and Spring Lake Park that fit those specific sites but could potentially be applicable to other sites in areas with similar ethnic demographics. By using a process that synthesized relevant information from literature, precedent studies, site analysis, and community interviews, clear themes emerged. The themes provide a direct connection between the findings and design goals, objectives, and redesign concepts. The final concepts and design considerations are the compilation of the research and speak to the research question. The following chapter presents the precedent studies and lessons learned in that research.

CHAPTER 4

PRECEDENTS

Introduction

Precedent study data critically informed the final design considerations and park redesign concepts (presented in Chapter 6). Eight parks and recreation areas were chosen as precedent sites for research. The projects were identified based on their ability to fit into one of three categories: Demographic Context & Park Design, Sites Based on Analysis of Ethnic Leisure Styles, and Historic Park Design in Latin American Countries. Each category had a set of specific properties examined to inform particular findings. This chapter presents each precedent project, discusses summarized findings for each project individually, and outlines lessons learned synthesizing each precedent category.

Demographic Context and Park Design

The category "Demographic Context & Park Design" includes U.S.-based urban park projects whose context and community spurred the design or redesign and highly influenced design elements. The public spaces within this category include:

- Grand Park (Los Angeles, California)
- Guadalupe Plaza Park (Houston, Texas)
- Domino Park (Miami, Florida)

All of the projects are located within areas of a large ethnic minority population, especially Hispanic American. Each park design or redesign involved the community during the design process. Public involvement highly influenced the design solutions. Two of the three built parks, Grand Park and Domino Park, are recognized continuously as significant landmarks within their respective locations for their cultural connections. Guadalupe Plaza Park received media attention locally in Houston and statewide in Texas for the redesign process. Therefore, because of their role incorporating a variety of viewpoints from the public and site location in a culturally diverse area, the three projects in this section informed demographic, particularly ethnic, impacts and community involvement within the urban park design process.

The properties examined within the Demographic Context & Park Design category are listed and explained on the following page.

Properties of:

Size:	Acreage
Location (Date of Origin):	City, State, Country location (Date of Origin)
Context:	Urban, rural, or suburban setting; significant adjacent buildings or land uses
Dilemma:	Items or situations that spurred the design or redesign.
Redesign Goals:	Project concepts & objectives in response to the dilemma(s)
Challenge: Solution:	Types of difficulties encountered within the design process or with the existing design: solutions discovered and implemented to overcome the design or process challenge
Outcomes:	Design solutions, participation use, overall success of the project

Figure 4.1 Grand Park. By Google Earth

GRAND PARK

Size:	12 acres
Location (Date of Origin):	Los Angeles, CA (2012)
Context:	Urban; surrounded by concert and theater venues, Courthouse, County Treasurer, Public Library, City Hall, restaurants
Dilemma:	Designed to enhance downtown Los Angeles, an area of high crime, low socioeconomic status, little opportunity for activity in non-business hours, and little green space for those who lived in downtown (mostly ethnic populations)
Redesign Goals:	• Transform downtown into a vibrant living, working, and entertainment zone • Respite from city life & hub for community events • Spur future downtown development, residential feel
Challenge: Solution:	• Poor existing spaces (retail, parking situation, plaza, 9 to 5 residents): Programming (events, lights) for use all hours & days, recreated spaces with purpose & amenities • Ignored populations before redesign: Program for diverse users (ages, ethnicity, socioeconomic status); multi-lingual signs, flags & statues for various ethnic groups
Outcomes:	• Increased activity in downtown, especially evenings & weekends • Spurred economic development in areas surrounding the park • Great diversity in park attendees • Increased recreation space opportunity for downtown residents • Variety of events (type, ethnic significance, time of day & year)

Figure 4.2 Guadalupe Plaza Park. By Google Earth

GUADALUPE PLAZA PARK

Size:	2.78 acres
Location (Date of Origin):	Houston, TX (1988)
Context:	Suburban; Mixed Use (commercial & single family); on western edge of Hispanic American East End
Dilemma:	The park exhibited economic appeal but ignored the local residents' needs. Civic spaces did not contribute to neighborhood revitalization & ignored the Hispanic American culture. Community leaders wanted more input. The homeless created unsafe conditions.
Redesign Goals:	• Create identity & place for Hispanic Americans (with tree coverage, foliage, open green space, water feature, & bike trail access) • Preserve Hispanic American architecture, heritage, cultural quality of neighborhood & market
Challenge: Solution:	• Unfavorable reviews of redesign despite 6 public meetings: Concept displayed at the Festival of East End Street and other public meetings • Unsafe & uncomfortable environment: Bike trails connecting to local trails, open design, and pedestrian lighting
Outcomes:	• Additional meetings with community to alleviate unfavorable responses to concepts **Park under construction (May 2015)

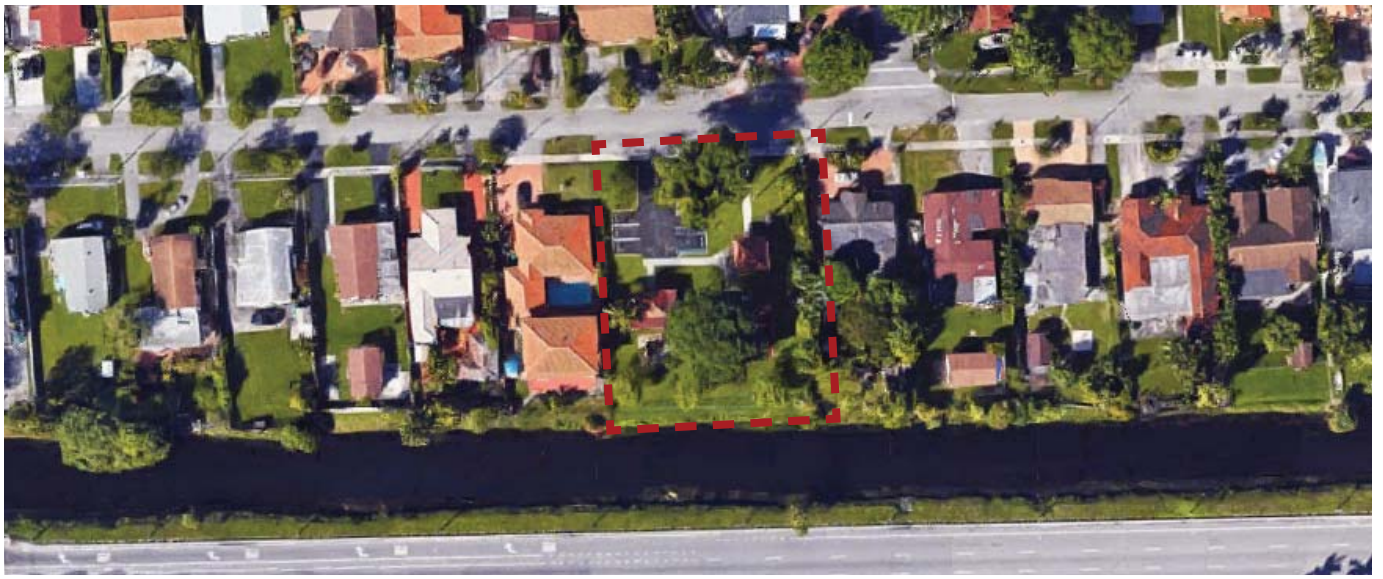


Figure 4.3 Domino Park. By Google Earth

DOMINO PARK

Size:	0.57 acres
Location (Date of Origin):	Miami, FL (1976)
Context:	Suburban; abuts to major street (Calle Ocho)
Dilemma:	Originally, people (mostly Cuban) gathered across from the Tower Theatre, stringed lights, set up tables, & played dominos "the same way they did in the old country." Elders shared stories with children. Miami did not realize the benefit of space in Little Havana.
Redesign Goals:	• Designed park for Domino player needs (table position, bathrooms) • Brought a "little part of home" back to the people of Little Havana • Created strong neighborhood relationships at mutual playing park
Challenge: Solution:	• Men publicly urinating: Adding bathrooms to park • Preserving the culture: Design revolving around Domino play; covered playing areas for protection from sun & rain • Maximizing playing space: Tables positioned pointing toward the nearest corner (carried over from how tables were set up before park was designed
Outcomes:	• Continued Dominio play at the park • Formation of Domino Park domino club (Circulo de Santiago de Cuba) open to anyone from Santiago, Cuba (play Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday in evenings); mostly men • Women's games on weekends at Domino Park: separate set of tables set up to play Continental and Conasta on Fri & Sat evenings

Lessons Learned

The following bullet points outline the information synthesized from Grand Park, Guadalupe Plaza Park, and Domino Park.

Social Activity:

- Social activity within the parks was critical to their success (or is anticipated to be)
- Events and programming served a variety of groups (age, gender, accessibility levels, ethnicity), times of day, and seasons
- Parks that employed event planners or whose design focused on creating spaces that encourage activity experienced high use

Safety:

- Active programming created a safe environment for visitors and encouraged use in the evening
- Creating a safe and comfortable environment was a key factor stakeholders identified
- Common solutions for creating a safe and comfortable environment included: incorporating pedestrian throughout the park, preserving site lines, staffing park employees and police, and providing visitors amenities (such as rest rooms) that encourage users to linger rather than pass through

Community Engagement in the Design Process:

- Engaging the affected community (through public meetings and communication with key stakeholders) minimized negative feedback
- Final design solutions responded to community needs and desires
- Design details displayed an understanding of the project audience and park users (such as providing bilingual signage, culturally significant monuments or statues, deliberate color and plant palettes, and offered events and activities)

Sites Based on Analysis of Ethnic Leisure Styles

The category "Sites Based on Analysis of Ethnic Leisure Styles" included specific investigation of ethnic recreation participation, perception, and preferences. While the focus was on the Hispanic American ethnic minority, various ethnic groups (minorities and majorities) were considered when developing the criteria and synthesizing the summary points. Two public spaces were examined in this category:

- Lincoln Park (Chicago, IL)
- Mecca Hills Recreation Area (near Palm Springs, CA)

Lincoln Park is a public park along the coast of Lake Michigan that has grown and developed into a large public space in Chicago. Because of its size and amenities offered, the park draws visitors citywide, including a large Hispanic American ethnic minority population. Mecca Hills Recreation Area is located among National Parks and campgrounds in southern California and also draws a high ethnic minority population. Each of the two projects were studied by sociologists or leisure research scientists, tracking participation patterns and preferences among varied ethnic groups (Chicago Park District, 1995; Klinka, 1993; Gobster & Delgado, 1993; Chavez et al., 1993). The two projects and related research presents a strong argument for ethnicity driven design through presentation of statistics and hard evidence pointing to varied leisure styles.

The properties examined for the Sites Based on Analysis of Ethnic Leisure Styles category are listed and explained on the following page.

Properties of:

Size:	Acreage
Location (Date of Origin):	City, State, Country location (Date of Origin)
Context:	Urban, rural, or suburban setting; significant adjacent buildings or land uses
Published Research:	Published research, patterns and preferences recorded and observed within research
Successes & Takeaways:	Specific design and decisions that successfully serve ethnic groups
Failures:	Specific design moves and decisions that does not successfully serve ethnic groups

"A survey of 911 park users with roughly equal representation of African Americans, Hispanic Americans, Asians, and whites found that park users...showed preferences and activity patterns unique to ethnic or racial groups" (Lincoln Park Framework Plan, 1995)

Figure 4.4 Lincoln Park. By Google Earth

LINCOLN PARK

Size:	1208 acres
Location (Date of Origin):	Chicago, IL (1865)
Context:	Urban; surrounded by colonial mansions, cafes, restaurants, retail shops, skyscrapers, museums; in largely Anglo-Saxon populated area
Published Research:	Lincoln Park Framework Plan (Chicago Park District, 1995) Lincoln Park Land Use Areas Analysis (Klinka, 1993) Lincoln Park: In-Park User Survey Findings (Gobster & Delgado,1993)
Successes & Takeaways:	• Families & organized social groups common for minority users • Minorities prefer passive activities (picnics, festivals, spectating) • Hispanic Americans tend to play soccer, African Americans basketball, and Asian Americans volleyball & golf • Core commonalities; some activities reflect cultural leisure styles • Highest commonalities between Blacks and Latinos; least between Whites and Latinos • Latino groups exhibited low variance in use patterns • Ethnic groups benefit from management patterns to avoid discrimination (multi-lingual staff/police; easier facility reservation process; safe and clean bathrooms
Failures:	• Management policies that allow for discrimination between ethnic groups and between staff and ethnic group users (1 in 10 minority users experienced discrimination) • Difficult access to park by minorities users (most ethnic users commute to park and there are frequent points of conflict between vehicles and joggers, cyclists, roller bladers, and walkers

Figure 4.5 Mecca Hills Recreation Area. By Google Earth

MECCA HILLS RECREATION AREA

Size:	26,242 acres
Location (Date of Origin):	Palm Springs, CA (1994)
Context:	Rural; in Coachella Valley less than an hour away from Palm Springs and two hours from Los Angeles; comprised of open areas and canyons; no developed campsites; recreation occurs in Painted Canyon, along Box Canyon Road, and side canyons
Published Research:	Mecca Hills: Visitor Research Case Study (Chavez et al.,1993)

Successes & Takeaways:

- Word of mouth advertising most effective with Hispanic Americans
- Hispanic Americans valued family recreation areas, safe, clean, and maintained facilities, accessibility, and low cost as most important
- Hispanic Americans more likely to see park rangers on park site (compared to European Americans)
- Training park rangers to be bilingual
- Installing multi-lingual signs and providing print media about park and regulations

Failures:

- Difficulty of communication between park rangers and non-English speaking Hispanic American park attendees
- Unmaintained facilities and amenities

Lessons Learned

The following bullet points synthesize key information synthesized from Lincoln Park and Mecca Hills Recreation Area.

Leisure Style Trends:

- Although studied ethnic groups share core commonalities, ethnic groups illustrate distinct and varied leisure styles
- Asian and Hispanic American ethnic groups tend to prefer passive social activities (picnicking and socializing)
- Asian and Hispanic American ethnic minority groups tend to exhibit higher group participation than individual participation in park recreation

Maintenance, Discrimination, and Access:

- Park management plans, maintenance staff, and police should be sensitive to ethnicity
- Discrimination is a prevalent factor affecting leisure styles and participation rates for ethnic minority groups in parks and recreation areas
- Management plans are most effective when conscious of community leisure styles (beyond styles influenced by ethnicity) to respond to actual user patterns
- Park access critically influences participation (the more easily accessible the park particularly through mass transit, the higher rate of varied ethnic users)

Historic Park Design in Latin American Countries

Three projects in three different Latin America countries were studied including:

- Central Alameda Park (Distrito Federal, Mexico City, Mexico)
- Parque Nacional (downtown San Jose, Costa Rica)
- Parque Concordia (downtown Guatemala City, Guatemala)

All parks are significant to their respective city and country. The countries represented in this category relate to the South Omaha community, the focus of this research project, because the residents in South Omaha are largely Mexican and Central American in origin (Gernandt, 2015). The purpose of this category is to present parks that exhibit Hispanic American park design. Findings from this category focus on spatial organization, design geometry, amenities and materials, and space activation. Understanding basic principles from culturally significant parks in Hispanic American countries lays a foundation to better respond to the significant Hispanic American population in South Omaha.

The properties examined for the Historic Park Design in Latin American Countries category are listed and explained on the following page.

Properties of:

Size:	Acreage
Location (Date of Origin):	City, State, Country location (Date of Origin)
Context:	Urban, rural, or suburban setting; significant adjacent buildings or land uses
Design Form & Geometry:	Overall design principles, symmetry, geometry, orthogonality
Spatial Organization:	Flow of spaces, type and size of spaces and circulation paths
Material Choice:	Types of materials used for design and features, both hard and softscape
Amenities:	Human comfort features including seating, trash, bathrooms, aesthetic features
Activities & Events:	Planned and unplanned events, organized and spontaneous events, sports, passive and active activities

Figure 4.6 Central Alameda Park. By Google Earth

CENTRAL ALAMEDA PARK

Size: 23.5 acres

Location (Date of Origin): Mexico City, Mexico D.F. (1592)

Context: Urban; surrounded by colonial mansions, cafes, restaurants, retail shops, skyscrapers, museums

Design Form & Geometry:

- Orthogonal, radial
- Symmetrical
- Regular geometric shapes
- Linear, diagonal paths
- Strong, primary axis (N/S)

Spatial Organization:

- Wide Entrances from major streets
- Wide paved, intersecting pathways
- Nodes at intersections
- Central circular plaza (gazebo)
- Open shaded grassed areas
- Circulation path hierarchy

Material Choice:

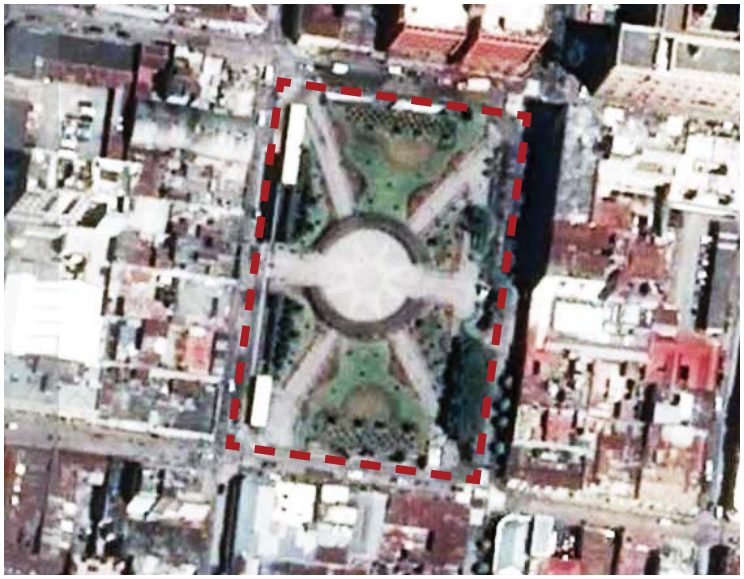
- Poplar trees (Alamos)
- Grass
- Paver pathways & nodes
- Flowers (pathway, define space)
- Concrete, wrought iron (benches)

Amenities:

- Fountains
- Seating (Benches, tree trunks)
- Statues (Juarez Monument, Hemiciclo)
- Aesthetics (wrought iron fence)
- Accessibility by transit, walking

Activities & Events:

- Entrance activities (music concerts, dance events, food, good, craft markets)
- Food vendors along pathways
- Music Concerts, political demonstrations, performances in central pavilion
- People watching, relaxing



"...a park in Guatemala City means some areas are green, but not all. Parks in Guatemala City look more like plazas where people hang out..." (Jamison N, 2014)

Figure 4.7 Parque Concordia. By Google Earth

PARQUE CONCORDIA

Size: 2.56 acres

Location (Date of Origin): Guatemala City, Guatemala (1787)

Context: Urban; near historic center of the capital; surrounded by National Institute of Forensic Science of Guatemala, other mixed-use

Design Form & Geometry:
- Orthogonal, radial
- Symmetrical
- Regular geometric shapes
- Linear, diagonal paths
- Strong, primary axis (E/W)
- Non-orthogonal plantings

Spatial Organization:
- Paved pathways
- Nodes at corners and center (termination of pathways)
- Central circular plaza
- Beds planted in large swaths
- Circulation path hierarchy

Material Choice:
- Tress (deciduous)
- Wood (pergola structure)
- Paver pathways, central plaza
- Shrub, grass, flower beds
- Concrete (seating wall, curbs)
- Metal (fence around plantings)

Amenities:
- Seating (concrete seating walls)
- Bust, Memorial Statues (Enrique Gomez Torres)
- Tall pedestrian lights
- Shade pergola

Activities & Events:
- Activities (music festivals)
- Meeting, gathering, conversation spaces largely in central plaza
- Strolling, promenading
- Shoe shiners (individuals, often children)

Figure 4.8 Parque Nacional. By Google Earth

PARQUE NACIONAL

Size: 5.48 acres

Location (Date of Origin): San Jose, Costa Rica (c. 1856)

Context: Urban; Asamblea Legislativa (Legislative Assembly), Museo de Arte y Diseno Contemporaneo (Museum of Art & Contemporary Design), Tribunal Supremo de Elecciones (Supreme Electoral Tribunal)

Design Form & Geometry:
- Orthogonal, radial
- Symmetrical
- Linear, diagonal paths
- Strong, primary axis (N/S)

Spatial Organization:
- Paved, intersecting pathways
- Statues celebrate nodes
- Central circular plaza (statue)
- Open shaded grass areas
- Circulation path hierarchy

Material Choice:
- Trees (palms, deciduous)
- Grass
- Concrete paver pathways and nodes
- Flowers, shrubs (celebrating key areas such as statues, plaza)
- Concrete (benches, curbs)

Amenities:
- Seating (Benches, tree trunks)
- Statues (National Warrior Monument, Juan Santamaria Statue)
- Water feature (standing pond)
- Bathrooms
- Tall lamps (safety feature)

Activities & Events:
- Activities (Art& Music Festival, International Festival [food, crafts], jewelry makers)
- Soccer/frisbee in grassy areas
- Relaxing, reading newspaper, conversation and gathering spots
- Picnicking

Summary Matrix: Design Form

Parks in Hispanic American cultures exhibit the following design form characteristics.

Hispanic American parks exhibit **axial, linear geometry** often with a circular **plaza at the center** of the park that acts as a **socially activated** space
Hierarchy is prominent, particularly in circulation paths. Often, parks exhibit a **clear primary axis** and emulate **radial form**. Wide paths accommodate several walkers and there is seating along walkways
Parks are largely **symmetrical** in design
Axes and linear circulation paths create **nodes at intersections**, which are celebrated (through fountains, statues, or another unique feature) and become **social gathering places**

Figure 4.9 (top) Alameda Central Park. By Google Earth

Figure 4.10 (top middle) Parque Concordia. By Google Earth

Figure 4.11 (bottom middle) Alameda Central Park. By Google Earth

Figure 4.12 (bottom) Alameda Central Park. By Luis Salvaz

○	○	○	○	Central Alameda
○	○	○	○	Parque Concordia
○	○	○	○	Parque Nacional

Summary Matrix: Material & Design Features

Parks in Hispanic American cultures exhibit the following material and design form characteristics.

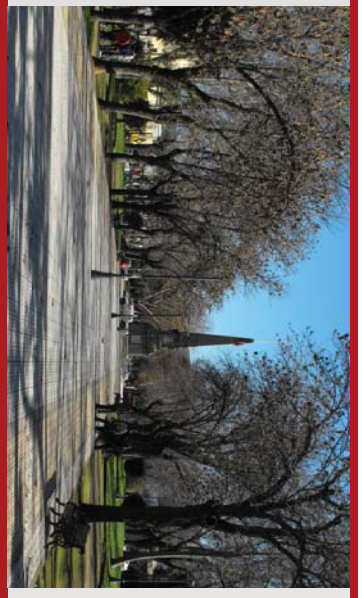
Sight lines along paths (usually constructed from concrete pavers) are preserved through the park creating a safe, **visible atmosphere**
Statues or memorials commemorate important historical or cultural events and people. They usually are prominently located
Seating is important throughout the parks. People make use of hardscape and softscape areas as seating options under **dense tree canopy**
The spaces, paved and unpaved, are activated through **group and individual activity** (festivals, markets, music, jewelry making, informal gathering)

Figure 4.13 (top) Alameda Central Park sight lines. By Guille Sep

Figure 4.14 (top middle) Alameda Central Park. By Frank Hemme

Figure 4.15 (bottom middle) Parque Nacional. By Grant Isaacson

Figure 4.16 (bottom) Parque Nacional activity. By Grant Isaacson

				
●	●	●	●	Central Alameda
●	●	●	●	Parque Concordia
●	●	●	●	Parque Nacional

CHAPTER 5

FINDINGS

Introduction

Interviews, precedent analyses, and literature provided a large amount of information. From the data collected, five themes arose:

- Passive & Active Recreation
- Parks as Social Space
- Spatial Relationships, Design, and Design Details
- Community Engagement
- Maintenance, Operations, and Expectations

This chapter summarizes the interview process, discusses the coding system, and presents findings from the interviews.

Interview Summary

I conducted the interviews between December 2014 and January 2015. Follow-ups occurred between January and March 2015. Of the twelve individual group representatives I contacted, nine responded. I was able to meet in person with six people, interviewed two over phone, and one corresponded through email conversations.

Individuals contacted for interviews were community leaders who were involved in a number of organizations. Through the nine interviews conducted, people identified with six neighborhood groups, five community groups, two cultural groups, and three other groups (business and political). Figure 5.1 provides a map illustrating involvement. With the variety of organizations, interests, and knowledge from interviewees, a comprehensive overview of the South Omaha community residents was gained. However, the opinions expressed, though providing great insight into community and ethnic group preferences and patterns, were not representative for every resident or ethnic group in South Omaha. The interviewees represented a small sampling of residents and opinions.

Community leaders answered two sets of questions: community representative and individual park visitor questions. The first set of questions (representative) assumed the leaders' ability to speak on behalf of the people they represented (such as their respective neighborhood, cultural, community, political, or business groups). This provided a broad range of recreational patterns and preferences in South Omaha.

The second set of questions (individual) addressed the interviewees as a park user. The information gathered from these conversations provided more site specific patterns and preferences and identified which parks were ideal to redesign. I interviewed people at their preferred park location. This was highly beneficial in gaining a deeper understanding of residents' desires and preferences in urban parks. Interviewees pointed out specific features of their parks, such as viewpoints, features, or amenities they enjoyed most during their visits. For example, a resident I interviewed pointed out specific trails he

used often when visiting the park. He also mentioned that he usually visited the park alone. Discussions that occurred during the interviews expanded beyond the pre-prepared interview questions and highlighted several relevant notes that helped guide design and define conclusions. Urban park recreation tendencies were not always immediately recognizable or evident. Therefore, interviewees were encouraged to explain and expand on their responses.

Interview Synthesis

Synthesis followed the nine interviews. Many respondent comments aligned with research trends, validating interviewees' preferences and desires within urban parks. Throughout the re-reading of notes from interviews, completing precedent studies, and discussions of the literature, five themes emerged:

1. Passive & Active Recreation
2. Parks as Social Space
3. Spatial Relationships, Design, & Design Details
4. Community Engagement
5. Maintenance, Operations, & Expectations

Once the themes were identified, interviews were coded accordingly. Each note made and each comment recorded was marked with a color that corresponded to a specific theme. Each theme is discussed in further detail with its correlated findings in this chapter. The following chapter, Chapter 6: Design translates the findings into design process, goals and objectives, and design concepts. The coded interviews can be found in the appendix.

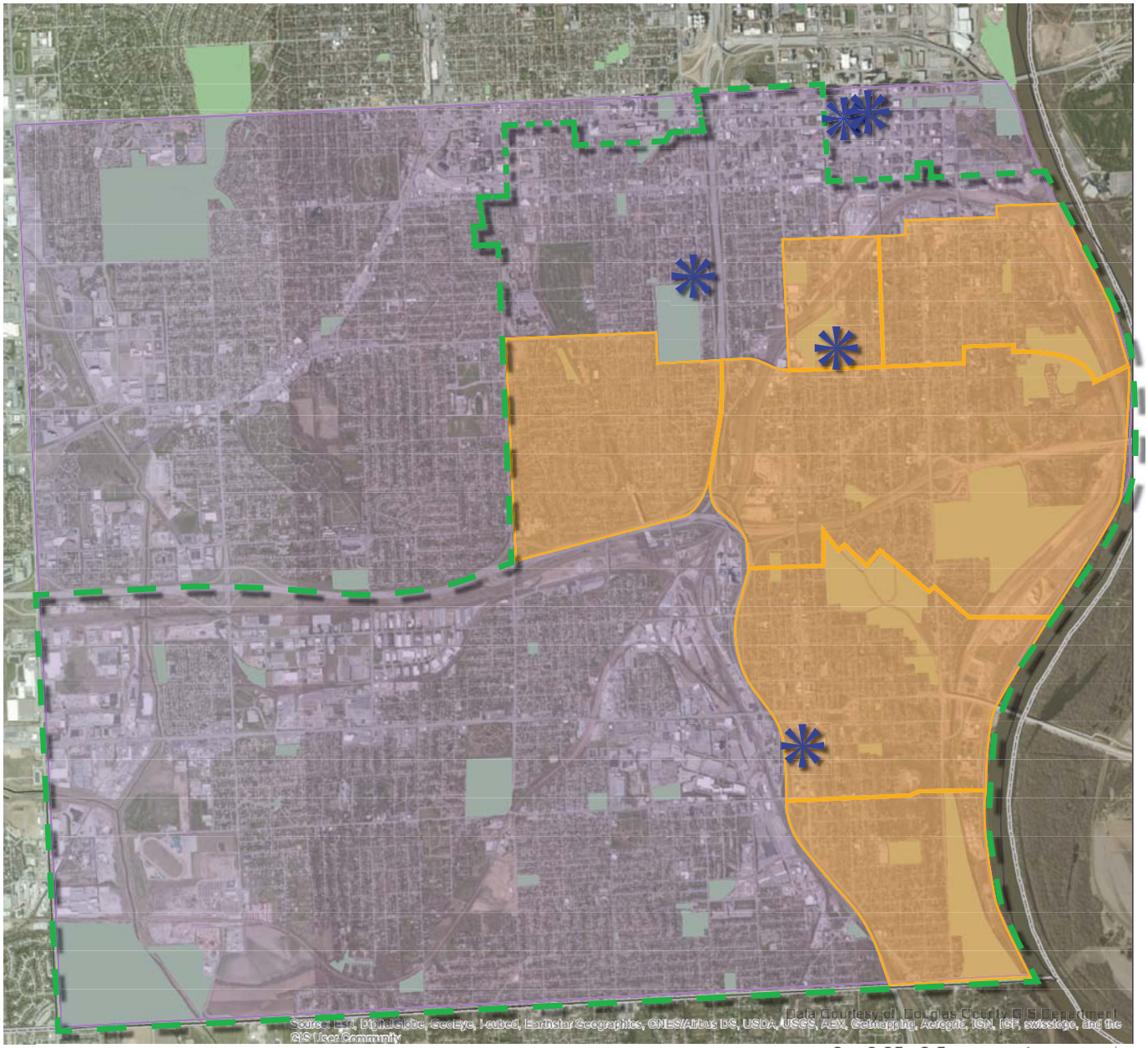


Figure 5.1 Interviewee Affiliations. By Author

9 Total Interviews

6 Neighborhood Connections

5 Community Connections

3 Business, Political Connections

2 Cultural Connections

Legend

Cultural, Community, or Government Organization Location

Neighborhood Association Limit

South Omaha Neighborhood Alliance Limit

Range of Recreational Activities

Interviewees reported on both active and passive activities and larger patterns and preferences for the urban parks. Soccer was the most popular sport and active recreational activity mentioned in South Omaha, especially for the Hispanic American community. Currently, very few parks offer soccer fields, but there is an overabundance of baseball and softball fields. Of the 32 parks in South Omaha, sixteen, or 50%, have baseball or softball fields while only four, or 13%, have soccer fields. People resort to playing soccer in the outfields, as those green spaces are usually the largest and flattest substitute found. The soccer fields that do exist in South Omaha parks suffer from extreme overuse because there are so few. Additionally, one interviewee noted the growing popularity of handball in parks. In her work, she observed primarily Hispanic American individuals using the courts.

Interviewees mentioned pools or splash pads and playgrounds as the next most preferred active recreational activity for many ethnic groups. Pools and splash pads were the most popular non-sport active or passive recreational activity in interviews. Water was popular for all groups and ethnic backgrounds. Several interviewees of varied ethnicities identified Hispanic American families as the most common group using public pools and splash pads. This observation by residents could be attributed to the fact that the Hispanic American community dominates the South Omaha demographic.

Playground equipment is the most common feature in South Omaha urban parks and seemed popular with all community members regardless of cultural background. Of the parks in South Omaha, 21, or 78%, offered a playground. Unfortunately, many interviewees noted that several parks' equipment was old and in disrepair, needing updates or replacement to remain functional. Although the Omaha Parks and Recreation Department strives to maintain playground equipment, limited budget and insufficient employees often presents unavoidable challenges.

Community leaders noted that residents prefer playgrounds in close proximity to picnic and

pavilion areas. Because many families in South Omaha gather in large groups to recreate and picnic, playgrounds within sight of picnic areas provides a safer environment for the many children that attend large group events. Although only interviewees with a Hispanic American background specifically noted playgrounds in close proximity to picnic areas, I assume parents of all ethnic backgrounds have similar values.

Of the passive activities discussed, picnicking was by far the most preferred by all community members. An interviewee observed that Hispanic American picnics tended to last for several hours, sometimes entire afternoons into evenings, while other ethnic group picnics were shorter. Typical activities at Hispanic American picnics are eating, playing on playgrounds, participating in pick-up sports games, and socializing.

Because so many families preferred multi-hour picnic events, reserving and finding unoccupied picnic tables and shelters becomes a challenge, especially during peak use time in summer and on weekends. Many South Omaha parks offered single tables scattered throughout the park, a single pavilion with four or five tables, or a combination of single and pavilion tables. These configurations create a challenge for several large groups seeking picnic space at the same park. Underserved groups get creative with the available space and tables. During one direct observation session, one group, shown in Figure 5.2, moved individual picnic tables to the back of their vehicles in the parking lot and pulled vehicles onto the grass to create their own gathering space accommodating their entire group.

In discussions about preferred and observed passive and active recreation, patterns emerged for specific ethnic groups, especially for the Hispanic American residents. Generally, Hispanic American families recreated in large groups and wanted spaces to accommodate their numbers. Because interviewees noted that Hispanic American families tend to also spend long periods in parks, several gathering areas would better suit their leisure styles.

Figure 5.2 Hitchcock Park picnic. By Author

Interviewees also identified fishing as a popular recreational activity. Two parks, Hanscom Park and Hitchcock Park, in South Omaha allow fishing. However, in an interview with an ESL teacher who worked closely with the Hispanic American community, she mentioned that many tended to prefer travelling to larger local recreational areas outside of South Omaha to fish and recreate. She noted that in her experience, families used surrounding lakes and parks for 'mini-vacations,' because many of the Hispanic American people she worked with are not able to take long or expensive trips.

Parks as Social Space

One interviewee explained how her Hispanic American culture framed her priorities and preferences about social space. When she lived in Mexico, she observed that the plaza acted as the center of public life and a critical platform for social activity. Residents travelled to the plaza often to buy goods, socialize, or find entertainment. Each plaza had a distinct identity. These qualities could be transferred and guide design for urban parks in South Omaha and serve all residents, regardless of ethnicity. A sense of place was critical, the interviewee noted. Therefore, any attempt to re-develop the Hispanic plaza and merge it with the American park should strive to encourage similar levels of social involvement from the community.

Event spaces for large groups were highly preferred among the residents. Additionally, outdoor areas programmed for various ages and functions seemed popular. Some existing events take place in parks, such as community nights out, a Hispanic American circus, or watermelon feed. However, most interviewees expressed interest in expanding the social offerings at their respective parks, both with activities that did and did not have an ethnic focus. One individual mentioned the desire to bring a multi-cultural music festival to her park and other educational activities especially for children at a local elementary school. A second park association leader hoped to implement community gardens and a pond at his local park to strengthen neighborhood relationships.

Figure 5.3 Park in Chinandega, Nicaragua. By Glen Jarrett

Spatial Relationships, Design, and Design Details

Spatial relationships, design, and design details were not topics many interviewees elaborated upon, which I expected. However, two topics emerged in responses from community leaders. Spatial programming (including connections, size, and type of spaces) and plant or material choice received comments.

The need for parking was a common response within interviews. Many parks in South Omaha, particularly smaller neighborhood parks did not offer on-site parking and street parking was often not an option with the narrow streets in the area. Although many residents reported that they regualarly walked to the park, the lack of parking laid was a problem at the larger parks that offered unique amenities such as Hitchcock Park's fishing pond. Interviewees also reiterated the need for several larger event spaces to accommodate recreating families, particularly for larger groups.

Plant and material palettes began to reflect the preferences of for different ethnic groups. European Americans tended to prefer a more natural woodland aesthetic with native planting. One interviewee hoped to implement a native planting area at her park as an educational tool for students, an economic benefit for the city by increasing park-adjacent property values, and research site for scientists and academics. No Hispanic American individuals interviewed expressed preference for a largely native and natural plant palette. However, color was noted as important to the Hispanic culture. They preferred colorful flowers and fountains, reminiscent of the homeland of recent immigrants. Figure 5.3 illustrates an example of a colorful park in Chinandega, Nicaragua.

Community Engagement

Engaging the community within the design process for projects is an important consideration for any landscape architect or planner. Common and effective methods include public meetings, open houses, and charrettes. However, depending on the project audience, the typical techniques may not be the best way to engage particular groups.

Figure 5.4 Spring Lake Park benches.
By Author

Figure 5.5 Lynch Park path quality.
By Author

According to a landscape architect in the Omaha Parks and Recreation Department, South Omaha ethnic minority groups have a low participation rate in public meetings, open houses, and charrettes. Community leaders also mentioned this difficulty. Residents who identified with or were knowledgeable about the Hispanic culture suggested that engagement opportunities occur where Hispanic Americans tended to congregate and find central to their culture.

Creating strong relationships within the community's culture was a major point made as well. Interviewees mentioned that the best collaboration they had with the Parks and Recreation Department happened when there was strong trust between the community, designers, and city employees. For ethnic minority groups, this trust could become even more important if the community involved in a project included undocumented immigrants, one interviewee noted.

Lack of resources for community engagement was a common challenge for both the Parks and Recreation Department and neighborhood organizations. Limited funds, time, and manpower often hindered a greater degree of community engagement. However, some community leaders noted that incorporating collaboration opportunities at key points in a project would help the community feel better engaged in the development of a design. Those critical points were at the beginning of a project, before the design team generated any concepts, and at least one more meeting during the design development phase. Initial drawings could then incorporate important community desires and needs from the start. However, from a designer's standpoint, facilitating a design charrette or open house could be challenging without a concept to present illustrating the limits and potential opportunities a project offered.

Figure 5.6 Christie Heights Park broken pavement. By Author

Figure 5.7 Spring Lake baseball benches. By Author

Maintenance, Operations, and Expectations

Lack of park maintenance was the most common complaint across all the interviews. Resident interviewees noted that trash pick-up was not frequent enough at peak use times (summer months and weekends), which caused animals to scatter trash around the parks and receptacles to become full to the point of overflowing, creating dirty environments. No responses stated that was a critical problem beyond infrequent trash pickup, which pointed to residents caring about their public spaces.

A second major maintenance concern was the condition of playground equipment, fields, and facilities as depicted in Figure 5.4 – Figure 5.6. Many interviewees identified out-of-date playground equipment as a potential hazard for children and wanted to see updates, even simply new coats of paint. Vandalism and graffiti was a problem in many parks, covering both equipment and facilities shown in Figure 5.7 – Figure 5.9. Vandalism and graffiti was cited as a greater problem in South Omaha than in any other part of the city. Fortunately, the issue has been addressed, resulting in improvements and a decrease of incidents in recent years.

The Parks and Recreation Department was aware of many of the concerns identified by community members. Although park staff actively work throughout the year to respond to trash pick-up, out of date equipment, and graffiti, limited budget and few employees created an ongoing challenge. A city employee mentioned that on average, funding allowed park updates around every twenty years. In West Omaha where parks were not used as heavily, a twenty-year period between updates was not hugely problematic. However, North and South Omaha where parks were much more highly used, a twenty year cycle could deter users because of the poor state of the facilities and equipment.

Aside from physical maintenance, the reservation process for use of park facilities also presented a problem for residents in South Omaha. As discussed earlier, families tended

Figure 5.8 Lynch Park concession pavilion graffiti. By Author

Figure 5.9 Mandan park graffiti. By Author

to recreate in large groups for long periods, especially in the Hispanic American community. When parks offered only a single pavilion with grouped picnic tables, families competed for use of that facility. One interviewee mentioned she noticed individuals would 'stake out' the pavilion early in the morning in order to ensure its availability at the time the group needed it. This informal "reservation" process not only deterred other groups from using the park, but also violated the formal Parks and Recreation Department reservation process. Lincoln Park in Chicago (a precedent study) experienced similar challenges with issuing permits for picnic areas for group festivals and events. Park officials minimized the difficulty by creating a more user friendly process by providing multi-lingual information on the procedure and making the information more accessible and clear to park users (Gobster, 1993).

Discrimination within parks was also a serious issue for Lincoln Park (Gobster, 1993). Although South Omaha residents interviewed did not report any problems with discrimination at their respective parks, the problem may still occur. Lincoln Park studies showed that discrimination was a serious management issue that deterred park users and made individuals and groups wary of park staff and police. Sometimes issues did not arise from staff bias but from a general lack of understanding of another culture and cultural preferences. In instances where Lincoln Park ethnic minority goers reported discrimination, Gobster noted staff and police did not intentionally discriminate, but were not sensitive to certain actions and language that ethnic minority groups perceived as prejudicial (1993).

People of all ethnic groups tended to use what was available and adapt their cultural recreation styles to what parks offered, though cultural patterns still shone through. Overall, interviewees expressed a desire for a sense of place and community.

Chapter Summary

Four key findings were identified through the interviews:

- Community engagement in the design process is highly valued by residents.
- There is an overall lack of soccer fields and picnic pavilions in South Omaha Parks.
- Residents desire for gathering spaces that cater to large and small scale events and activities.
- Park maintenance is a concern with residents and a challenge for park staff.

All findings discussed in this chapter were synthesized from the interviews and incorporated pieces from precedent studies and literature. Their role directly influenced the development of the design considerations and park redevelopment concepts discussed and presented in the following chapter. The ability to pinpoint comments and code them into the five themes created a clear and direct connection from data to findings to design considerations and ultimately to design concepts. Chapter 6 presents design goals and objectives and incorporates all types of research conducted and collected within this research project.

CHAPTER 6

DESIGN

Introduction

The following chapter applies the findings to a redesign of Lynch Park and Spring Lake Park in South Omaha. The designs reflect my interpretation of the five themes (community engagement; range of recreational activities; spatial relationships, design, and design details; parks as social space; and maintenance operations and expectations) and applies them to design goals, objectives, and concepts for each park site.

This chapter is divided into three parts: discussion of the redesign strategy, site analysis, and presentation of design concepts for Lynch Park and Spring Lake Park. Within the first part, connections are made between findings and design goals and objectives. The second section analyzes South Omaha, macro scale, then at the park sites, micro scale, and the final section delivers the design concept for each park.

Design Considerations

The themes provided a bridge from the data to design goals, objectives, and concepts. Not only did the themes provide an organizational framework, but could translate to the entire design, implementation, and post-construction processes (see Figure 6.1). The explanations for each theme in the graphic seek to outline consideration for projects with community in mind, particularly for communities with unique demographic makeups.

Two themes, Range of Recreational Activities and Spatial Relationships, Design, and Design Details are addressed within the scope of this project. Community Engagement, Parks as Social Space, and Maintenance, Operations, and Expectations are discussed as recommendations and opportunities for future research in Chapter 7: Conclusions.

Design and Implementation Framework

The process framework in Figure 6.1 seeks to organize the themes into a cycle. As projects age, the needs and desires of users can shift, thus altering the use and success of an urban park, as discovered through precedent studies. Therefore, a regular re-evaluation after the park has had time to function, designers will ensure that user needs and desires are met.

Community engagement is critical successful design of public spaces. Gaining the perspectives of people near the park early in the process. In addition, the community engagement step also includes research into the park, the city, and demographic context.

Range of Recreational Activities and Spatial Organization, Design, and Design Details themes are intended to be an iterative strategy and include the entire design process from schematic through final design. Within the iterative process, it is important to revisit the values highlighted from the community to ensure their consideration within the design.

Parks as Social Space seeks to understand park sites beyond physical form and appearance and considers the social, political, and

Figure 6.1 Process Framework. By Author

entertainment opportunities urban parks can provide. Park programming which includes specific events and activities, should engage park users throughout the day, week, and year. Creating a strong social foundation with an urban park connects the space to the community, who may start to feel a sense of place attachment and ownership to encourage repeat use.

Maintenance, Operations, and Expectations addresses urban parks through a functional lens, addressing what plans should be in place to maintain optimum use for people and what users are expecting within the park. Again, engagement with the community is important to understand expectations at the park particularly regarding maintenance and safety considerations. If maintenance follows the leisure style preferences and patterns of people who use the park, then complaints against urban parks may decrease as well as eliminate other issues such as graffiti or vandalism.

Redesigned Sites Rationale

Lynch Park and the southern 9.1 acres of Spring Lake Park were selected for redesign through a process of interviews and macro scale analysis. The leaders of Lynch and Spring Lake Parks provided critical and comprehensive feedback, which assisted the design and also indicated a desire to see final concept plans and research conclusions. Because this research project incorporated community responses in design, Lynch Park and Spring Lake Park were determined to best be able to accomplish that goal, incorporate precedent and literature research, and illustrate the success of community oriented design to answer the initial research question.

Two park concepts instead of one were proposed to illustrate the flexibility and applicability of the design goals and objectives (outlined on pages 116-117), at different scales and responding to park users. Lynch Park also serves the wider South Omaha community so this concept illustrates a highly adaptable interpretation of the goals and objectives that fits a range of users.

Macro and Mirco Scale Analysis

To better understand the South Omaha region (macro), and Lynch and Spring Lake Park sites (micro) diagram map analyses were important. The redesign proposals were then able to incorporate findings from literature, precedents, and interviews and also South Omaha and site specific conditions.

Macro scale analysis looked at all South Omaha urban park locations relative to population, race and ethnicity, and existing barriers. A park matrix for urban parks in South Omaha completes the macro scale analysis. The park matrix sought to identify existing features in parks to help me understand what a "typical" South Omaha park was and also what features residents might better respond to. Macro scale analyses helped me understand the region's character and typical conditions for South Omaha urban parks. Therefore, the park sites chosen for redesign could be identified as typical, further building the argument for the flexibility of the design goals and objectives. Additionally, macro scale analyses can help identify other parks in need of redesign. Micro scale analysis examined the Lynch Park and Spring Lake Park sites. Micro scale analysis identified site specific criteria and conditions at each park that proved important when applying the design goals and objectives. Site analyses guided the overall design concepts. The maps created through this analysis looked at park location, land use, transportation routes and walkability, topography, major access points and key views, existing conditions, and overall opportunities and constraints.

Macro and micro scale analyses aided design development. The final proposed redesign concepts for Lynch Park and Spring Lake Park reflected the site analyses meaningfully and responded to the site deliberately.

Macro Scale Analysis

- South Omaha Park Location
- Population and Park Location
- Race/Ethnicity and Park Location
- South Omaha Barriers

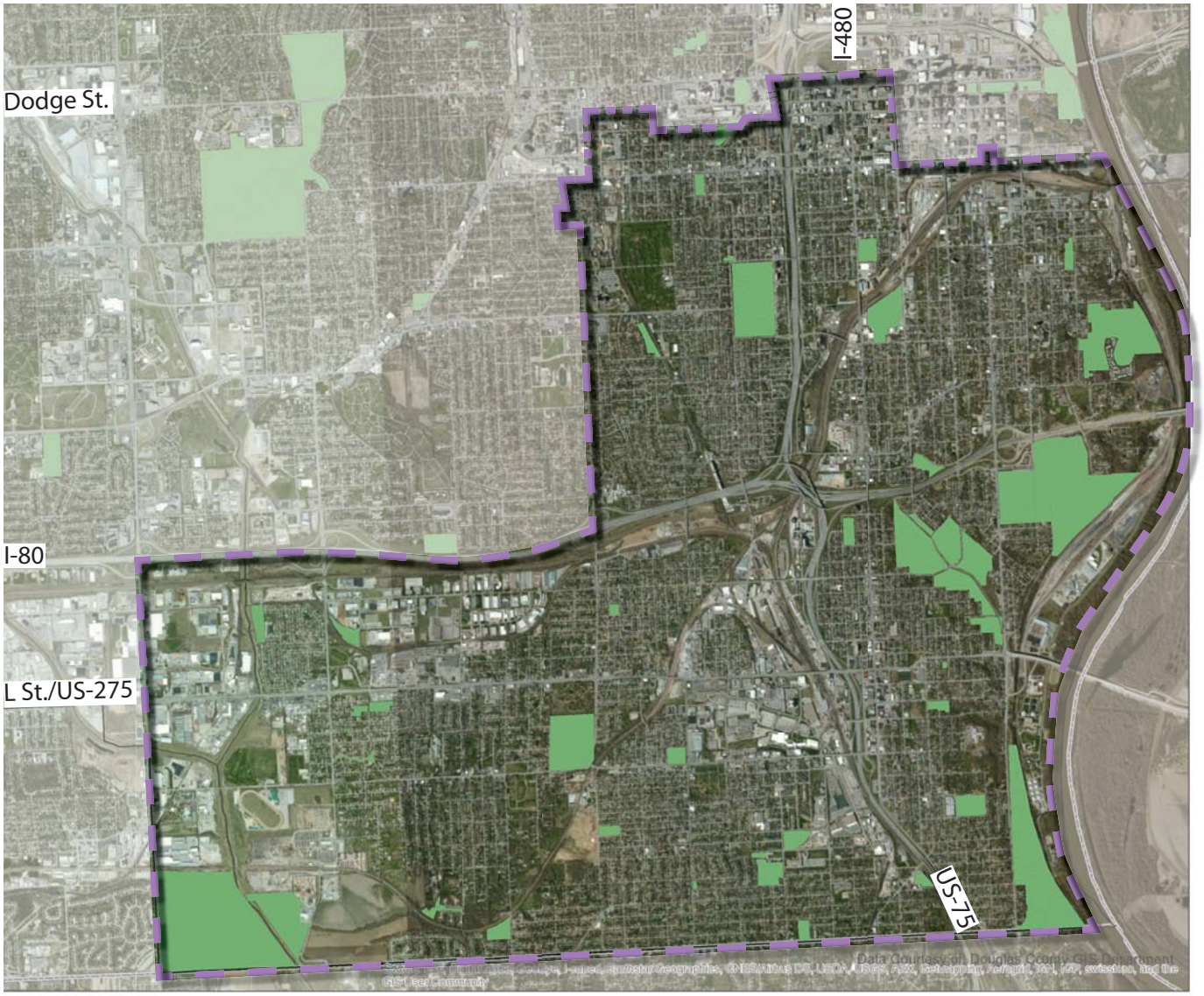


Figure 6.2 South Omaha Park Location.
By Author

South Omaha: Park Locations

South Omaha has 32 parks ranging from 0.6 to 197 acres. Parks span throughout the southern part of the city, providing most residents with access to park space in a reasonable distance. It is important to identify the quality of existing parks, understand what amenities are offered at each site, and compare that to resident and community needs within parks. Figure 6.6 and Figure 6.7 provide further analysis on amenities and outline statistics on South Omaha parks.

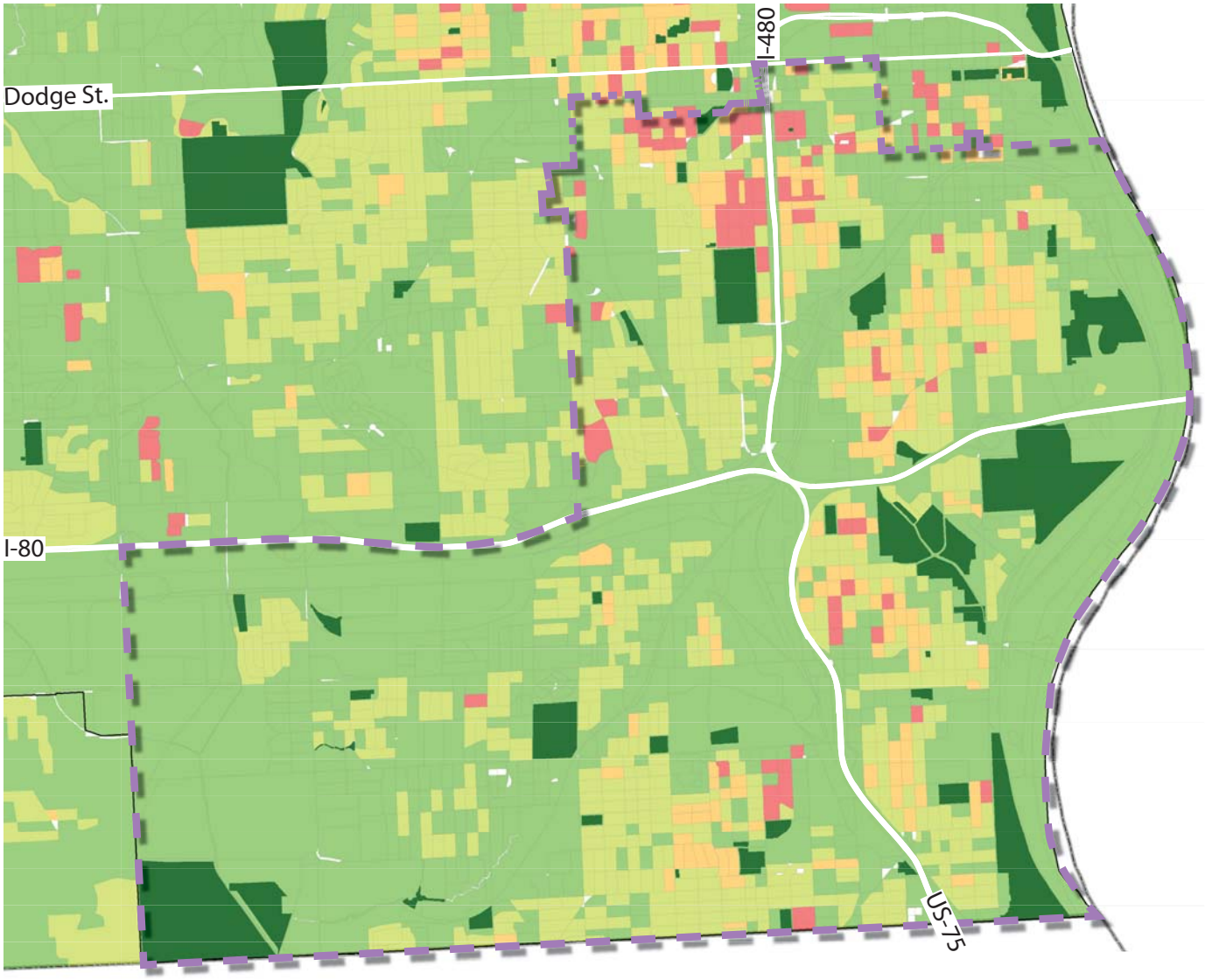


Figure 6.3 South Omaha Population.
By Author

South Omaha: Population Density

The north end of South Omaha begins the transition to downtown, with higher density, population, and industrial land use than other suburban areas. Most of the highest populated parcels in South Omaha are found near the northern edge of this region. Many occur close to urban parks. A factor in site selection considered urban park proximity to highly populated areas in order to benefit more people within the scope of this project.

Legend

- South Omaha Boundary
- Park
- Low (0-4,000 ppl/mi^2)
- Medium (4,000-8,000 ppl/mi^2)
- High (8,000-16,000 ppl/mi^2)
- Highest (over 16,000 ppl/mi^2)

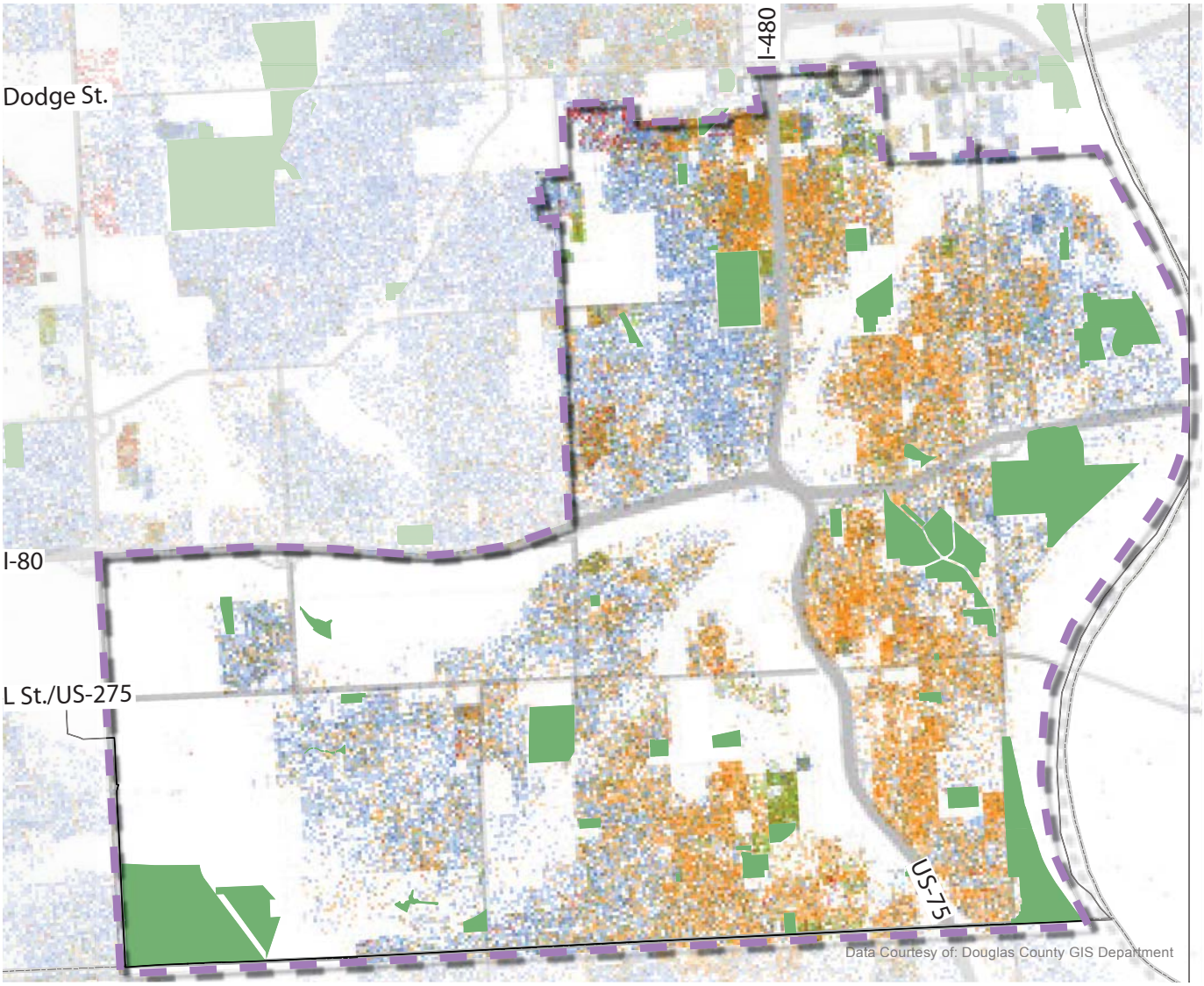


Figure 6.4 South Omaha Race/Ethnicity and Park Location. By Author

South Omaha: Ethnicity/Race and Park Locations

As previously discussed, South Omaha is unique to the city with its ethnic diversity and large presence of the Hispanic American community. Because research focused on studying resident leisure style preferences and patterns, ethnicity played an important role in understanding the community. Locating parks in areas with a distinct ethnic pattern best suited the goals of this project. Therefore, areas east of I-480 and US-75 were ideal locations for park redesign sites.

Legend

- South Omaha Boundary
- Park
- African
- Asian
- Caucasian
- Hispanic
- Other race/Native American

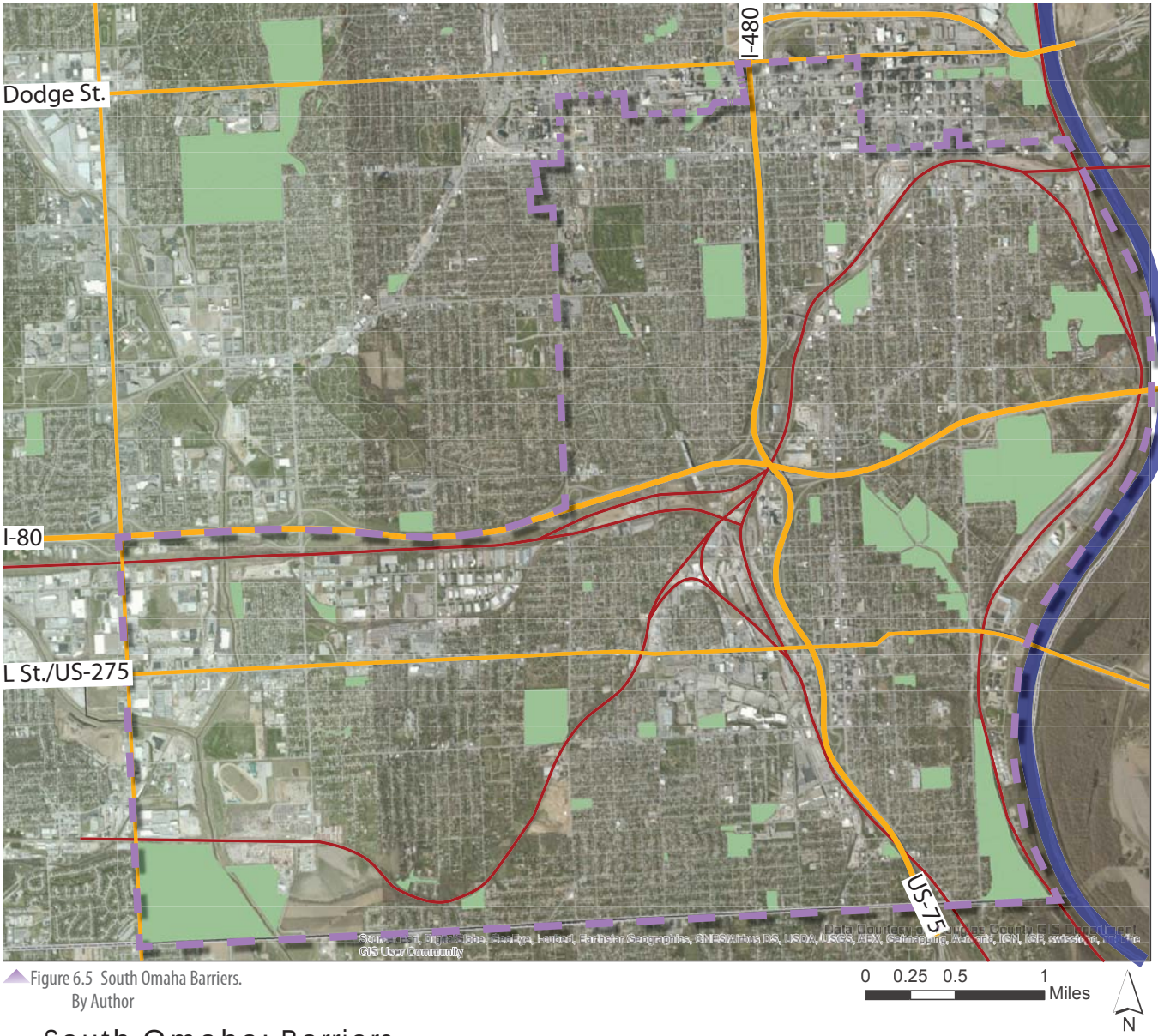


Figure 6.5 South Omaha Barriers.
By Author

South Omaha: Barriers

South Omaha is divided through a number of physical barriers. Interstates and railroad corridors bisect the region flanked by industrial land uses. South Omaha is essentially isolated from the rest of Omaha by industrial lands. The Missouri River bounds South Omaha on the east. These features present challenges when seeking to connect South Omaha to the rest of the city and when attempting to link parceled residential sections within South Omaha.

	Park Name	Location	Established	Size (ac)
1	Albright Park	2002 Madison Ave		3.4
2	Brown Park	5708 S 15 St	1924	11.6
3	Christie Heights Park	3623 P St		5.6
4	Columbus Park	1329 S 24 St		6.06
5	Deer Hollow Park	1801 Deer Park Blvd	before 1917	19.3
6	Dewey Park	550 Turner Blvd		7.28
7	Dorthy Patach Environmental Area	5109 S 20th St		3.9
8	Essex Park	6215 S 36th St		0.6
9	Faye Blvd Park	57th-60th Faye Blvd.		1.8
10	54th & Holmes Street Park	58th & Holmes St		2.6
11	Gerald Ford Birthplace Park	3202 Woolworth Ave		0.86
12	H. H. Harper Park	6606 48th St		6.9
13	Hanscom Park	3201 Woolworth Ave		57.6
14	Harper Valley Park	5150 Madison St		4.3
15	Harrison Heights Park	3720 Martha St		4.95
16	Highland Park	2512 D St	before 1915	5.9
17	Hitchcock Park	4220 Q St		46.8
18	Karen Park	6288 H St		7.4
19	Keith, Miguel Park	2909 U St		7.5
20	Leavenworth Park	3425 Leavenworth St		9
21	Lynch Park	20th & Center St		15.1
22	Mandan Park	6221 S 13th St	before 1915	10.9
23	McKinley Park	2808 Harrison St		4.3
24	Michael Thell NEA	4250 S 57th St		6.7
25	Morton Park	5724 S 41st St	before 1915	2
26	Mount Vernon Gardens	6011 S 13th St	1924	6
27	Munnelly, John P. "Red" Park	56th & Holmes St		4
28	Pulaski Park	4065 G St		1.9
29	Seymour Smith Park	6802 Harrison St		197
30	Spring Lake Park	4020 Hoctor Blvd	before 1915	36.8
31	Unity Park	4716 S 18th St		0.6
32	Upland Park	3104 Jefferson St		12.2

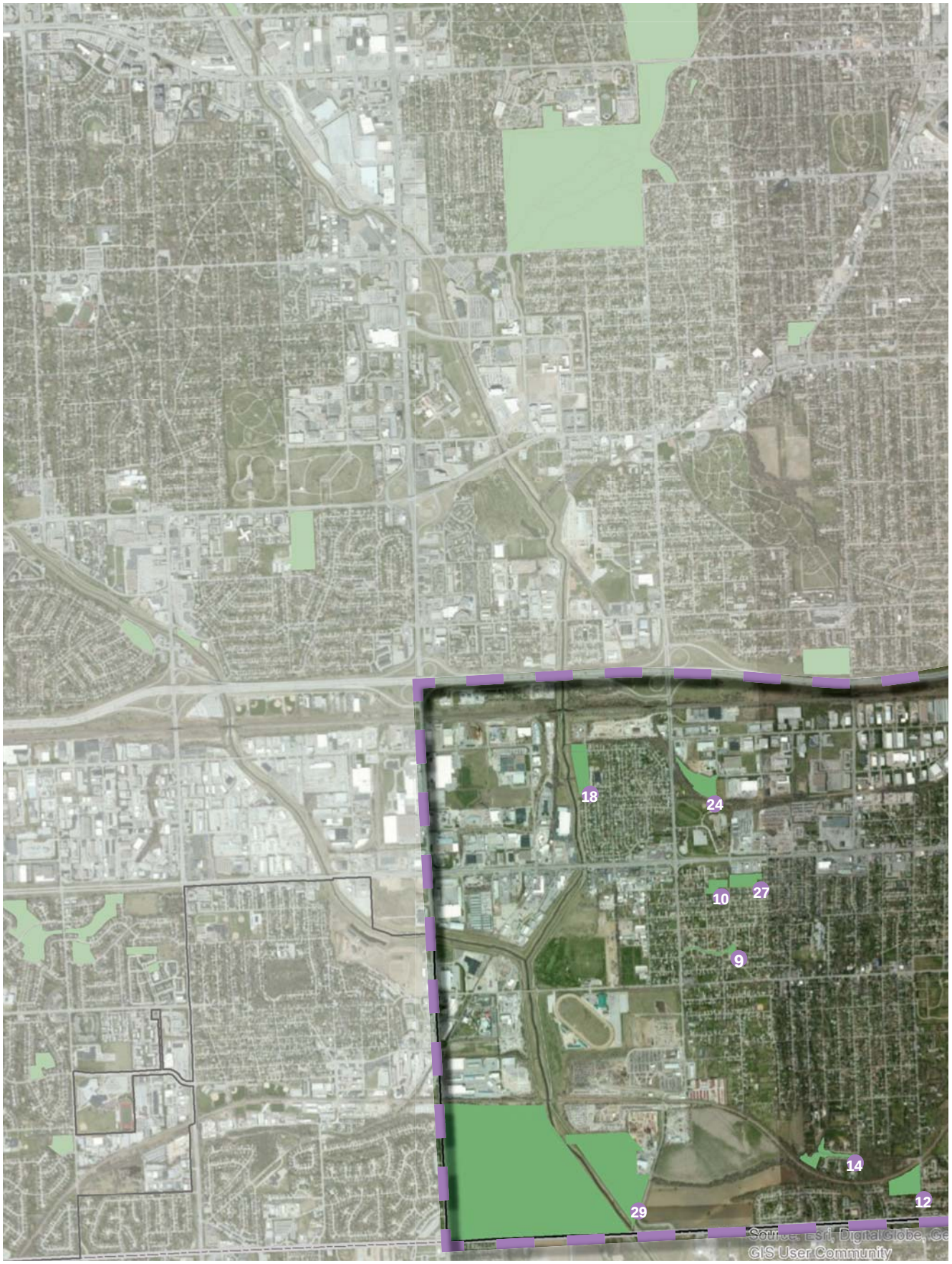
South Omaha: Existing Urban Park Features

The above table provides a comprehensive view of amenities and features offered at urban parks in South Omaha. Figure 6.7 (found on pages 98 and 99) provides an identification key for the parks listed above. The average park size in South Omaha is 15.96 acres. The 32 parks together create over 510 acres of parks space for Omaha. The parks were examined individually to identify features offered through site visits, the Omaha Park and Recreation Finder (www.dogis.org/parksfinder/), and Google Earth. Of 24 features studied, parks offered 7.2 features on average. Further analysis into specific amenities highlighted design items to focus on (such as soccer space), especially when grounded needs voiced by residents in interviews.

Park Name	Baseball field(s)	Basketball Court	Community Center	Dog Park	Fishing	Football Field	Grilling/Fire pits	Hiking	Ice Rink	Large Green Space	Mature Woodland	Monument/Memorial	Parking	Pavilion/ Covered Space	Picnic Tables (scattered)	Pre-fabricated Playground	Public Pool	Restroom	Running/walking Trails	Signage	Soccer Field	Splash Pad	Tennis Court	Volleyball Court
Albright Park	X	X								X	X					X				X				
Brown Park	X		X								X		X			X		X		X				
Christie Heights Park	X		X										X		X	X		X	X	X				
Columbus Park	X		X							X	X	X	X	X		X		X	X		X			
Deer Hollow Park		X								X	X			X	X	X			X					
Dewey Park		X	X								X		X		X	X		X	X	X			X	
Dorthy Patach Environmental Area																								
Essex Park																X			X	X				
Faye Blvd Park																X								
54th & Holmes Street Park										X	X									X				
Gerald Ford Birthplace Park												X							X					
H. H. Harper Park	X										X			X	X	X				X				
Hanscom Park	X	X	X	X	X		X			X	X		X		X	X	X	X	X	X				
Harper Valley Park																								
Harrison Heights Park										X	X		X	X	X	X			X	X				
Highland Park		X									X			X	X	X			X	X			X	
Hitchcock Park	X				X	X	X		X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X			X	
Karen Park	X									X				X	X	X	X		X	X				
Keith, Miguel Park	X									X			X								X			
Leavenworth Park	X									X	X			X		X			X	X				X
Lynch Park	X	X					X			X			X	X		X		X	X	X			X	
Mandan Park	X						X	X			X		X	X	X	X		X	X	X				
McKinley Park										X	X				X	X				X				
Michael Thell NEA								X			X													
Morton Park	X									X				X	X	X		X		X		X		
Mount Vernon Gardens								X			X		X						X	X				
Munnelly, John P. "Red" Park										X	X				X	X				X				
Pulaski Park	X	X					X			X		X		X	X	X			X	X				
Seymour Smith Park	X									X	X		X		X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	
Spring Lake Park	X						X	X		X	X		X	X	X	X	X		X	X				
Unity Park		X											X		X	X				X				
Upland Park										X	X			X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	

Figure 6.6 Park Inventory Location. By Author

For example, sixteen South Omaha parks offer baseball fields while only four offer soccer fields. Soccer was identified as one of the top recreational needs through interviews and many people mentioned playing soccer in ballfield outfields because of lack of soccer space. Another main point identified from community members was a need for large spaces for picnics and group gatherings. Less than half of parks in South Omaha offer picnic pavilions and fewer than half offered more than one. This macro analysis also established a baseline expectation for how many features a 'typical' park offered. Therefore, redesign concepts compare how the sites responded to residents and offered more features.


18
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Source: Esri, DigitalGlobe, Ge
GIS User Community

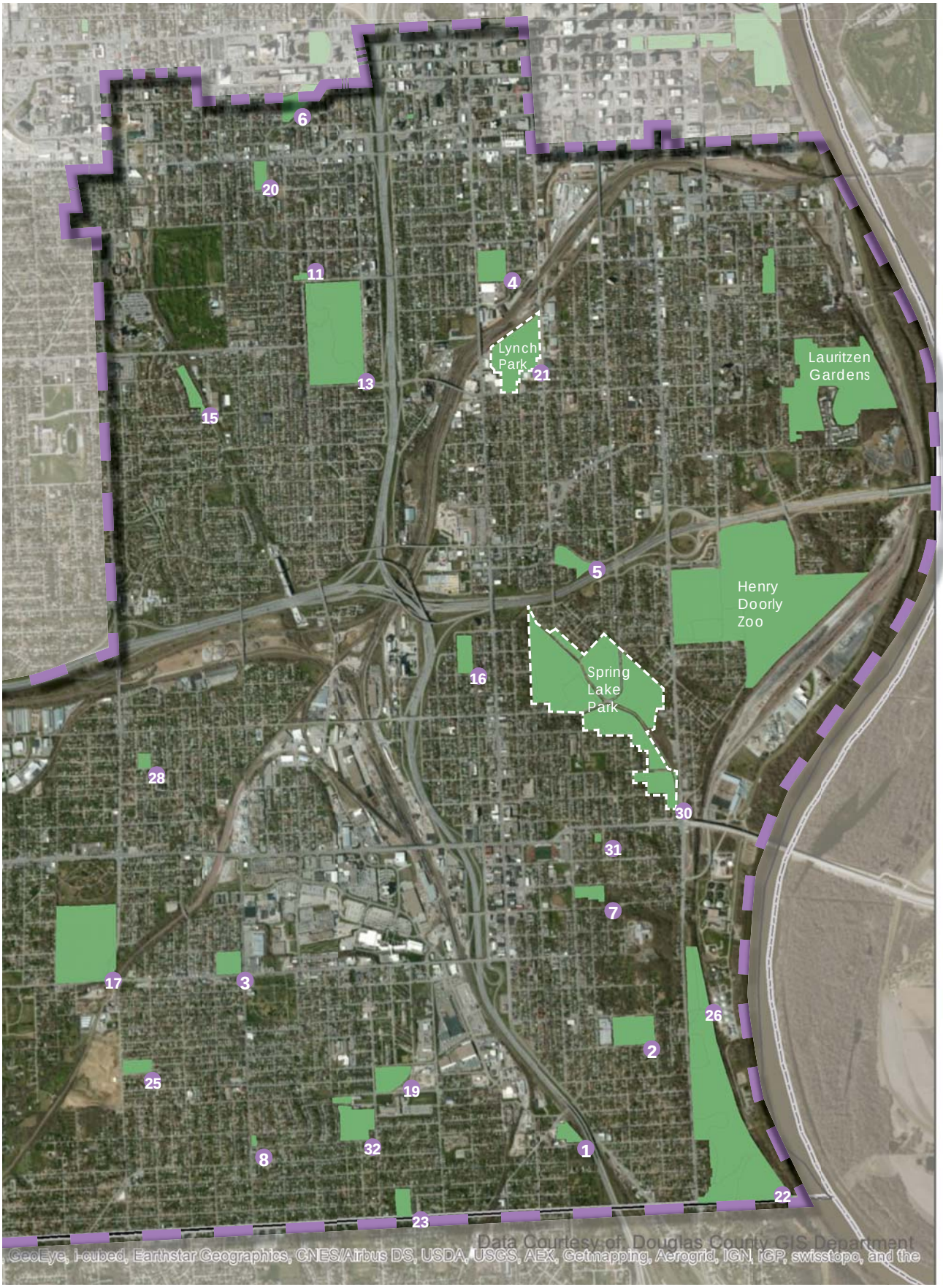


Figure 6.7 Park Identification Key Map. By Author

Micro Scale Analysis

- Park Location
- Land Use
- Transportation Routes and Walkability
- Topography and Hydrology
- Major Access Points and Views
- Existing Conditions
- Opportunities and Constraints

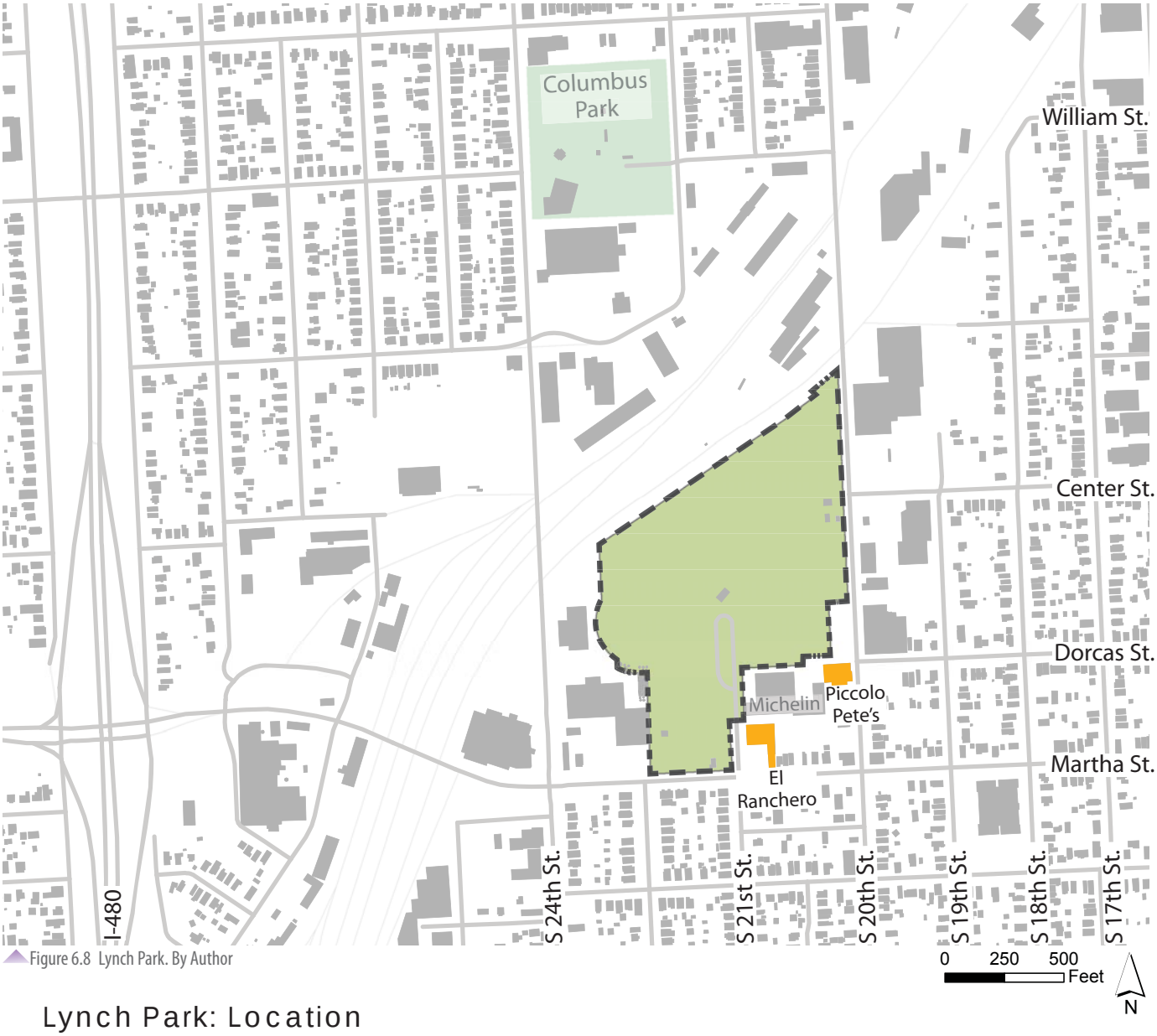


Figure 6.8 Lynch Park. By Author

Lynch Park: Location

Lynch Park is located in the northern part of South Omaha east of I-480 and south of downtown. The park is 15.1 acres and bound by Martha St., S 20th Street, and railroad lines. The park offers both active and passive recreational activities traditionally used by both neighborhood and city residents. Currently, the major concerns with the park are little 'curb appeal,' direct adjacency to industrial rather than residential parcels, and amenities in disrepair.

Legend

- Lynch Park Boundary
- Lynch Park

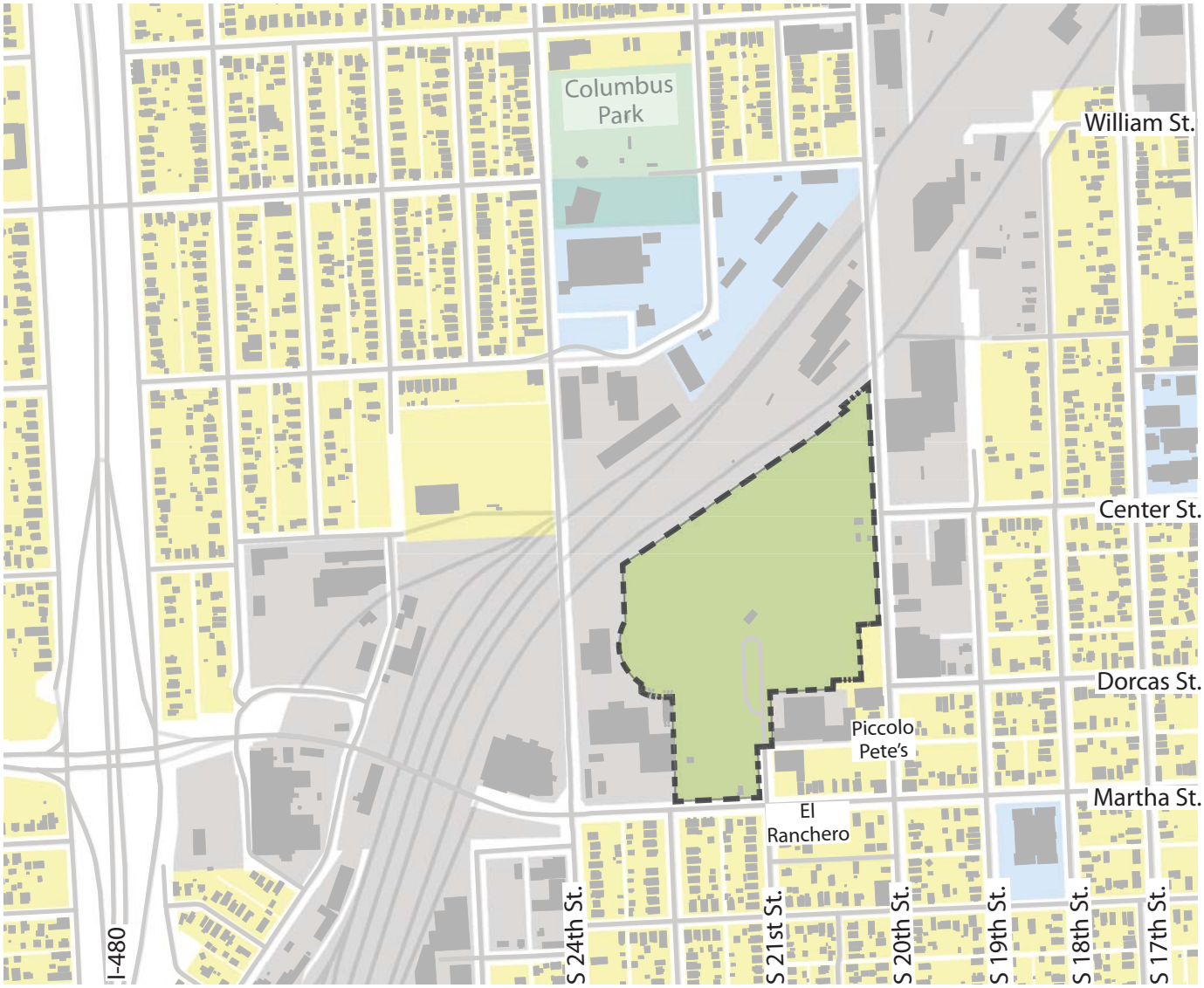


Figure 6.9 Land Use. By Author

Lynch Park: Land Use

Industrial is the primary land use adjacent to Lynch Park. Residential land uses are within a quarter mile of the site, but drawing residents past industry to the park is critical and challenging. Industrial buildings are unappealing and can be perceived as unsafe. Extending the park to envelop the adjacent industrial, particularly along S 20th St., to eliminate the barrier between the Lynch Park and residents. Furthermore, leveraging nearby business like Piccolo Pete's and El Ranchero to increase park attendance.

Legend

- Lynch Park Boundary
- Lynch Park
- Residential
- Industrial
- Civic

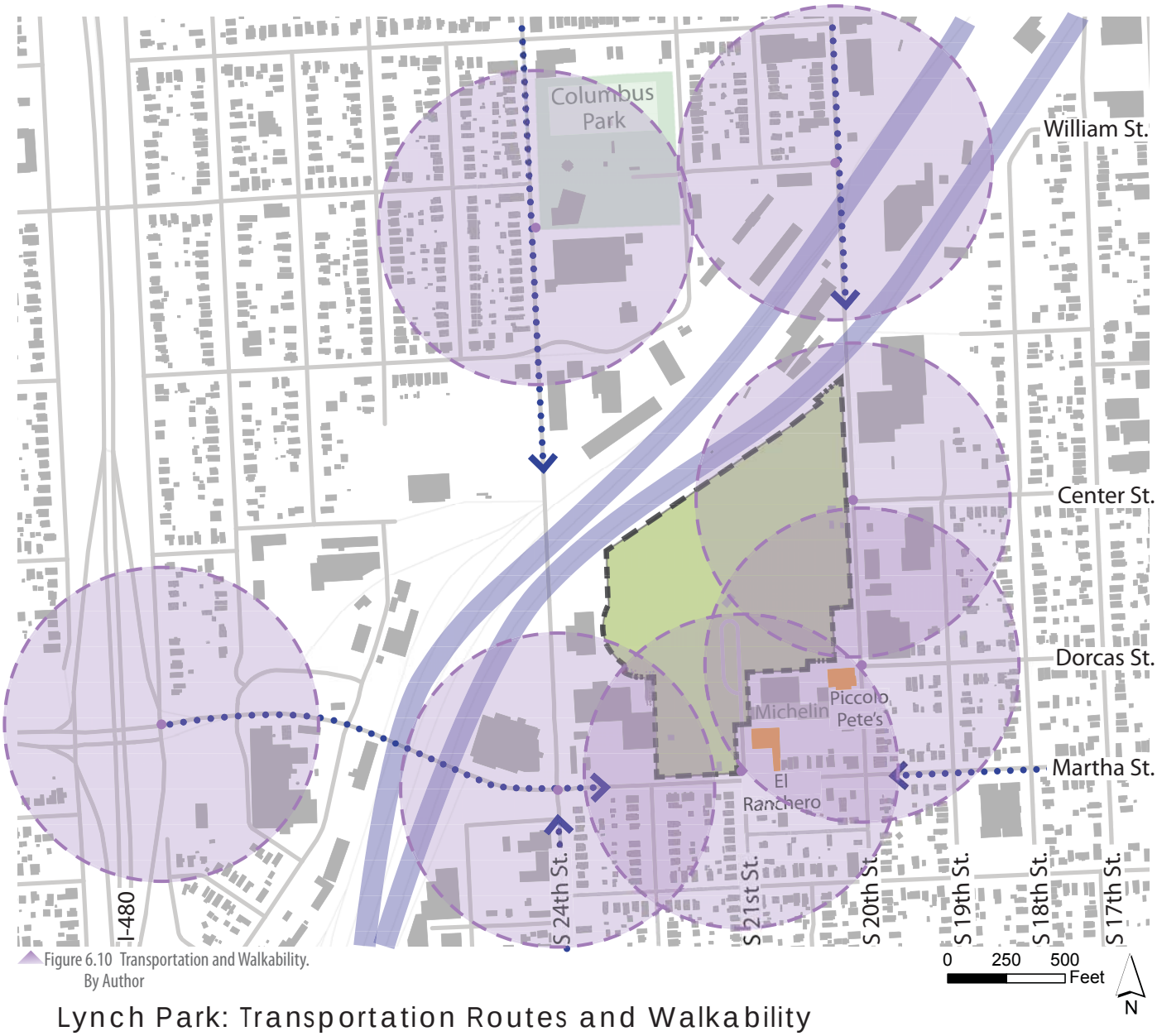


Figure 6.10 Transportation and Walkability. By Author

Lynch Park: Transportation Routes and Walkability

At major access points for pedestrians and vehicles, many neighborhood residents can reach the park within a quarter mile walk. However, industrial businesses and rail roads present the greatest barriers for accessibility. Narrow sidewalks also inhibit walkability for pedestrians. The park is highly accessible by vehicles from I-480 along Martha St.. Additionally, S 24th St. and S 21st St., major North-South roads, directly connect downtown Omaha to Lynch Park within 3 miles.

Legend

- Lynch Park Boundary
- Lynch Park
- Primary Vehicular Access
- Railroad Line
- 1/4 Mile Range

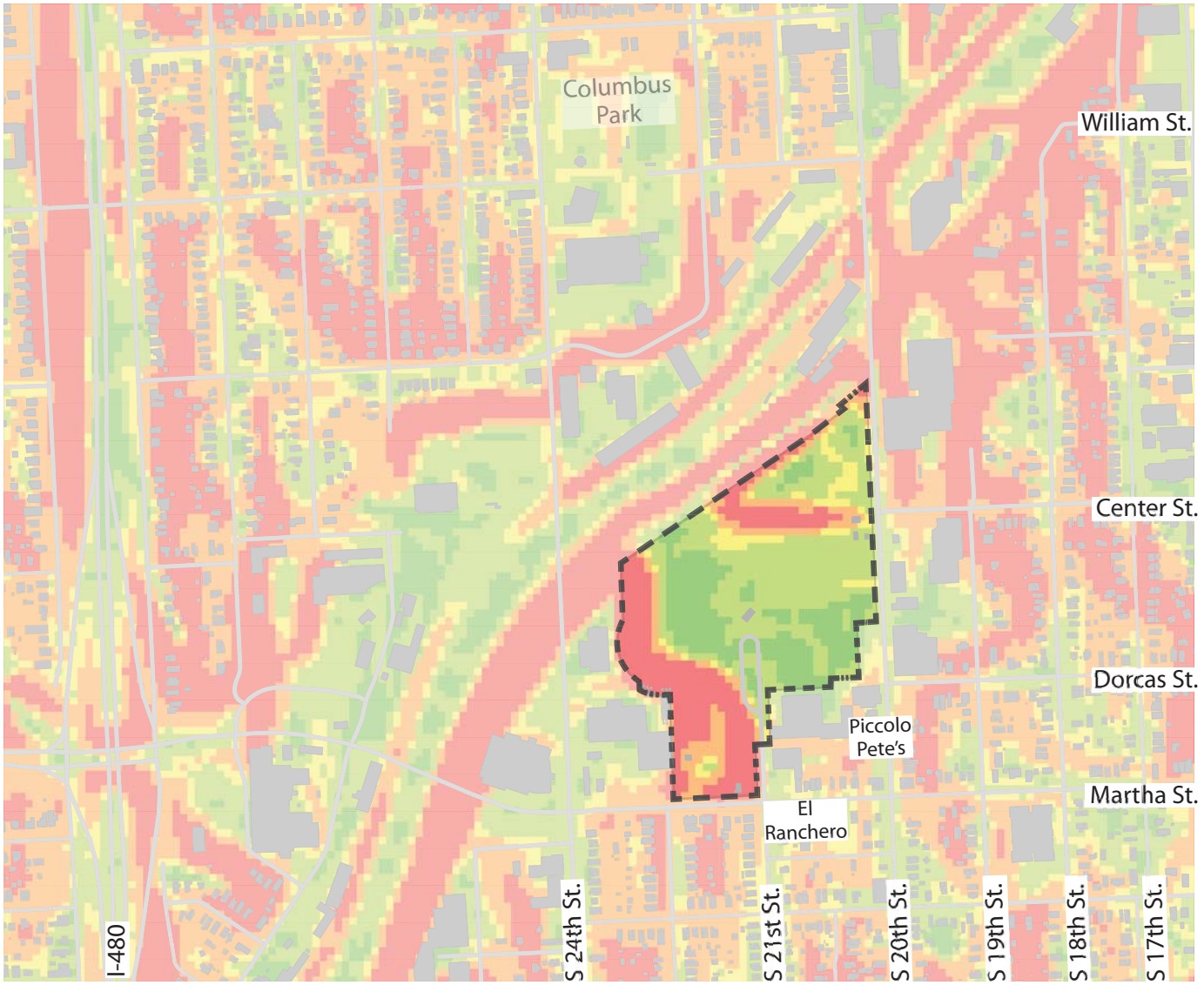


Figure 6.11 Lynch Park Slope.
By Author

Lynch Park: Topography

The topography along the western and southern parts of the site present the greatest challenge to design. The steep slopes greater than 35% would either require large amounts of earthwork or fitting activities within the existing topography. Creating private gathering spaces could benefit from dramatic grade. The topography in the northern part of Lynch Park is not as challenging as the majority of the site has little slope, under 10% or could be regraded to under 10%.

Legend

- Lynch Park Boundary
- Over 35% Slope
- 20%-35% Slope
- 15%-20% Slope
- 5%-15% Slope
- 0%-5% Slope

Figure 6.12 Lynch Park Access Points and Views. By Author

Lynch Park: Access Points and Key Views

Although Lynch Park has little curb appeal, several major access points and key views offer opportunities to engage the neighborhood and adjacent businesses. The park is most visible along S 20th St. Visitors can see into the park from the neighborhood to the east. Martha St. frontage does not present views into the park because of the steep slopes. The main pedestrian and vehicular access points to Lynch Park are along S 20th St. and Martha St.

Legend

- Lynch Park Boundary
- Lynch Park
- Primary Access Points
- Key Views

Figure 6.13 Lynch Park Existing Conditions. By Author

Lynch Park: Existing Conditions

Lynch Park provides two picnic pavilions, although one has no furniture. Vegetation along the western edge of the site creates an effective buffer between the park and unappealing railroad lines and backside of industrial buildings. The park offers several active recreational opportunities including two ballfields, four tennis courts, one basketball field, and a playground, all in some stage of disrepair. Some walking paths exist, and are in poor condition. One parking lot serves the park near the center of the site.

Legend

- Lynch Park Boundary
- Pedestrian Circulation
- Undefined Activity
- Defined Passive Recreation
- Defined Active Recreation
- Vegetation
- Site Structures/Parking

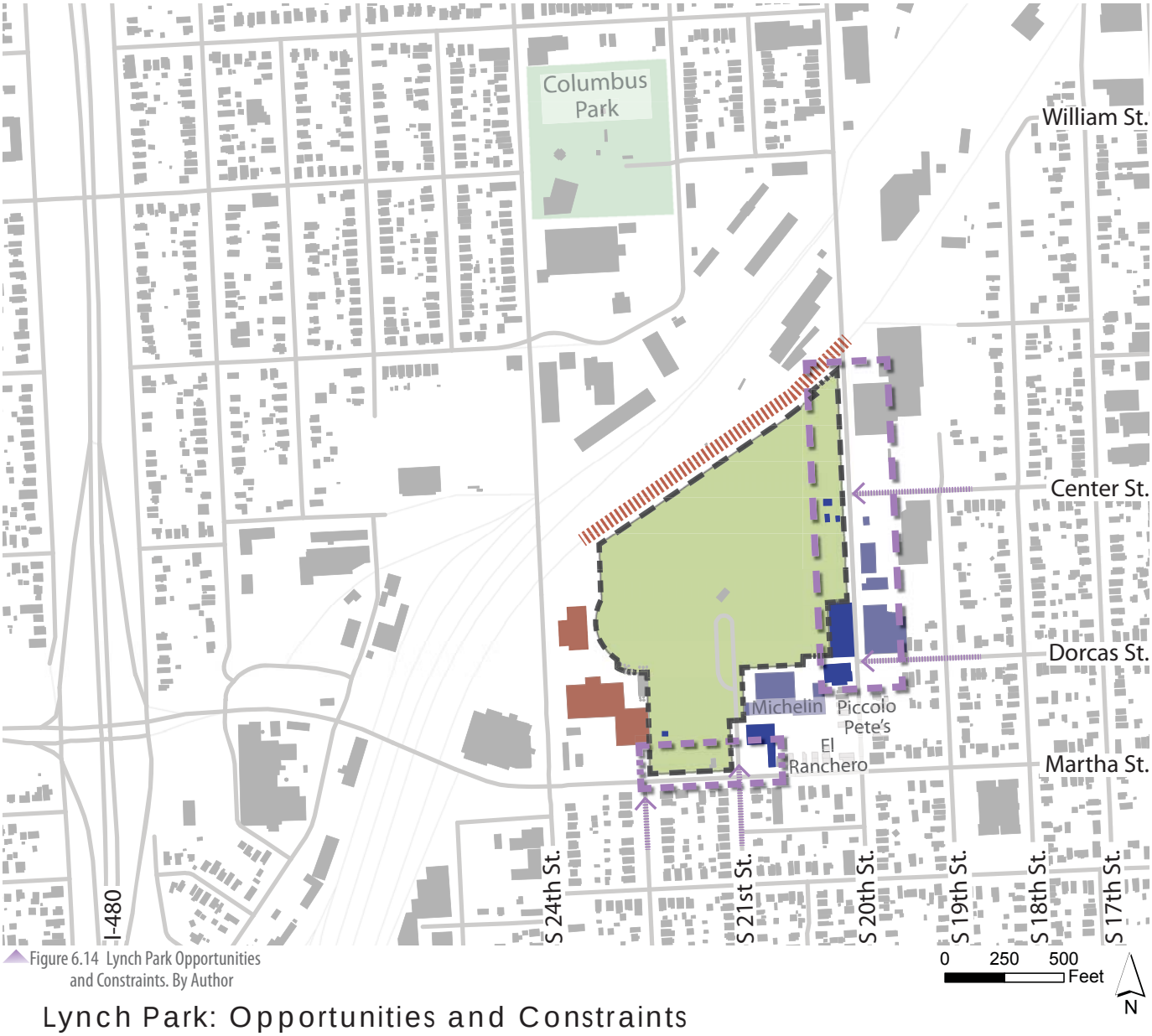


Figure 6.14 Lynch Park Opportunities and Constraints. By Author

Lynch Park: Opportunities and Constraints

The main constraints for Lynch Park are adjacent industrial businesses and railroad lines north of the site and the steep slope. Three unused brick buildings on the eastern edge can be refurbished for picnics. Engaging S 20th St. and Martha St. with activity can draw residents from nearby neighborhoods and provide the desired curb appeal. Leveraging adjacent businesses such as Piccolo Pete's and El Ranchero can also encourage park use.

Future plans could look to acquire the Michelin Retread Technologies building to transform into a community center at the core of the park and acquire buildings across S 20th St.

Legend

- Lynch Park Boundary
- Immediate Opportunity
- Future Opportunity
- Constraints
- Street Engagement Areas

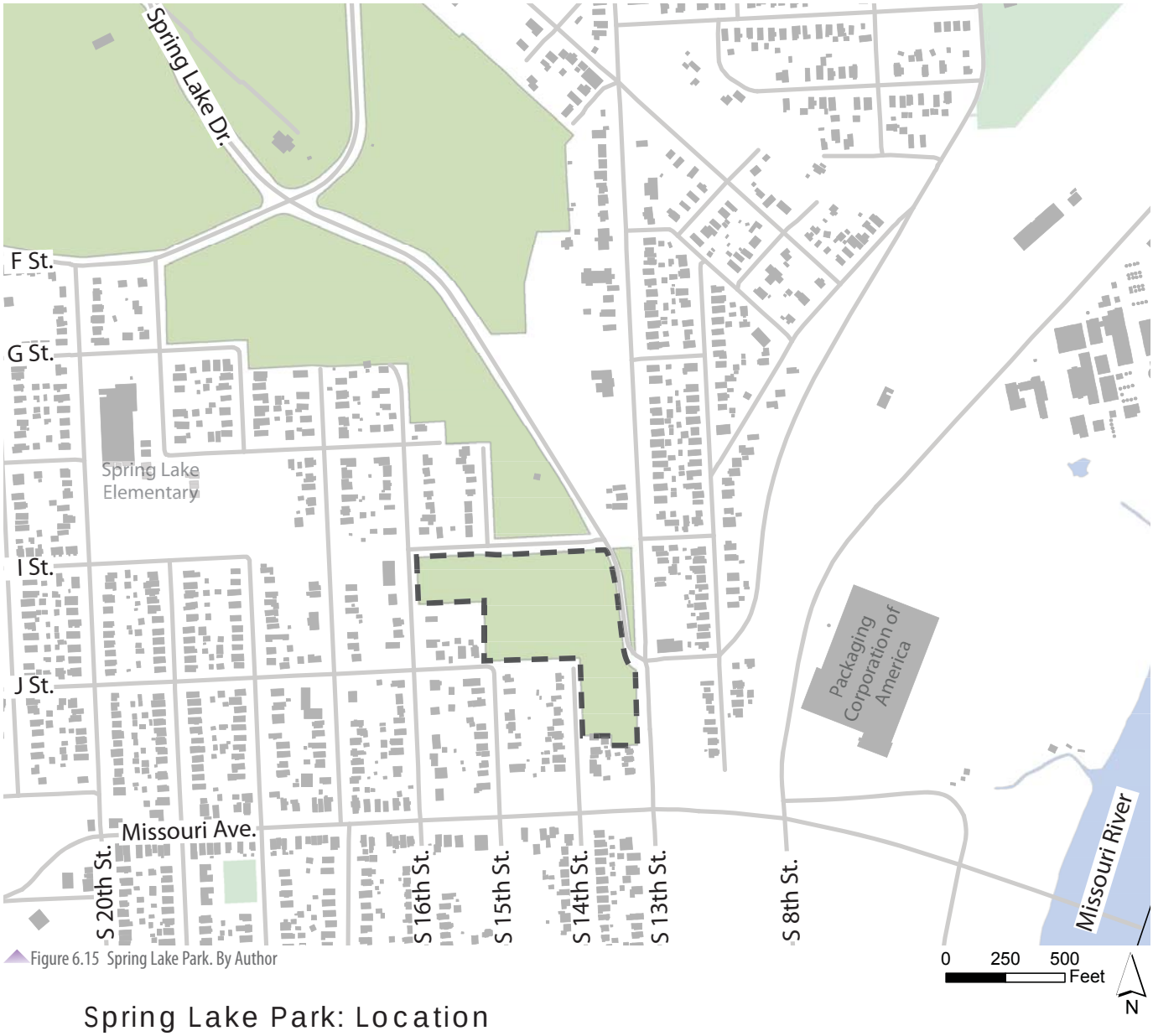


Figure 6.15 Spring Lake Park. By Author

Spring Lake Park: Location

Spring Lake Park is located in the southern part of South Omaha just west of the Missouri River. The entire park is 36.8 acres, however the redesign site is 7.1 acres bound, by I St., Spring Lake Dr., and S 13th St. The site offers one programmed activity, a ballfield and is used primarily by neighborhood residents. Currently, the major resident concerns with the park are amenities in disrepair, with little flexibility with existing green space, and no space for large community events.

Legend

- Spring Lake Park Boundary
- Spring Lake Park

Figure 6.16 Spring Lake Land Use. By Author

Spring Lake Park: Land Use

Residential is the primary land use adjacent to Spring Lake Park, the park's primary users. Spring Lake Elementary is within a quarter mile of Spring Lake Park. Engaging adjacent neighborhoods and connecting I St. from the school to Spring Lake Park for pedestrians can introduce new social opportunities. All park entrances should draw visitors from the residential neighborhood, riverwalk along the Missouri River and local businesses to the park.

Legend

- Spring Lake Park Boundary
- Spring Lake Park
- Residential
- Industrial
- Civic
- Commercial

Figure 6.17 Spring Lake Park Transportation and Walkability. By Author

Spring Lake Park: Transportation Routes and Walkability

Spring Lake Park is highly accessible to residents in the adjacent neighborhoods and Spring Lake Elementary School. Additionally, the park is within a quarter mile of Missouri Ave and S 13th St., a major intersection, and Missouri River trail system that are gateways into Omaha from Iowa. Vehicular access to the park is less convenient, especially from the interstate or downtown. Major access is from Missouri Ave. from east and west and either Spring Lake Dr. or S 13th St from the north and south.

Legend

- Spring Lake Park Boundary
- Spring Lake Park
- Primary Vehicular Access
- Railroad Line
- 1/4 Mile Range

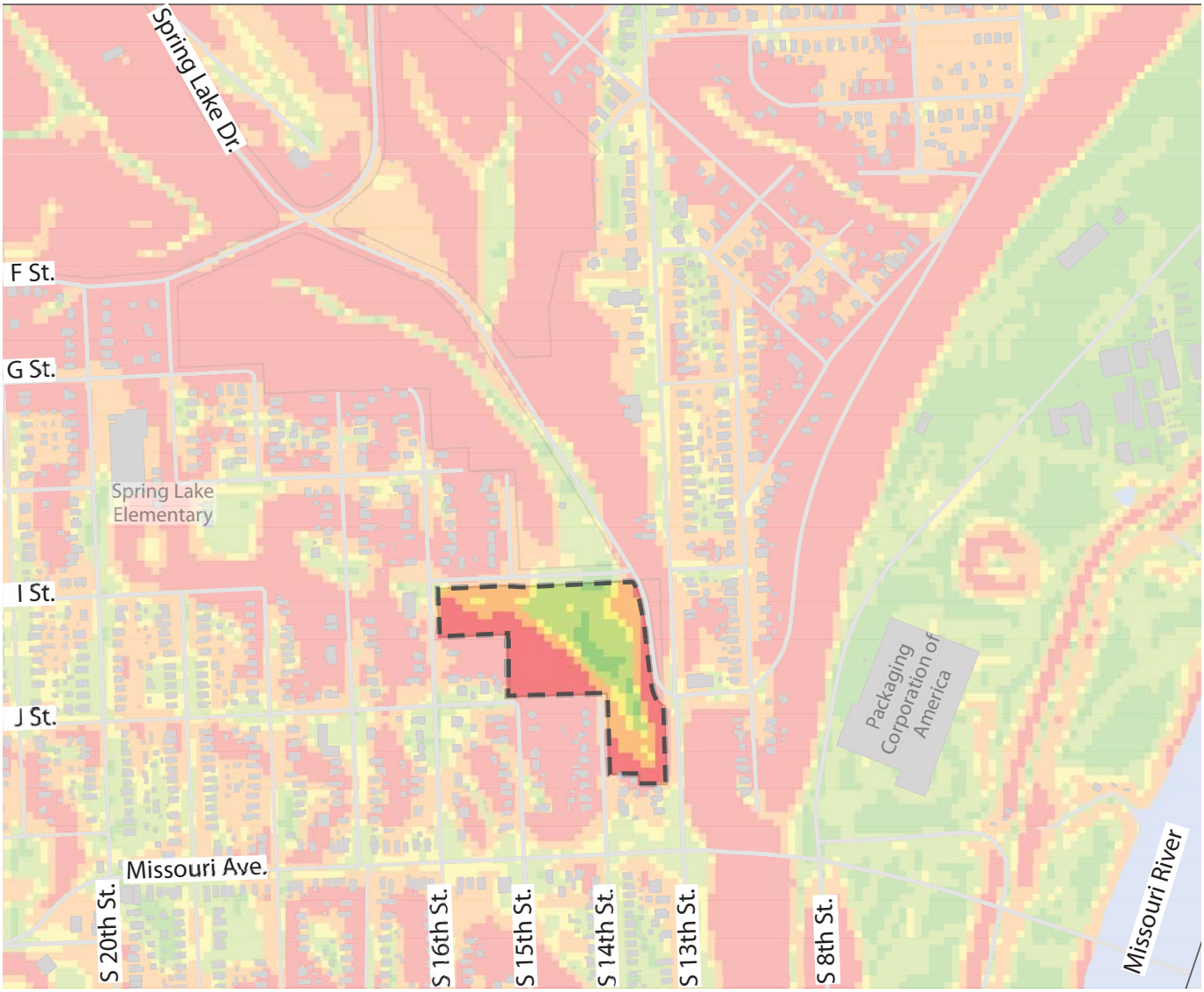


Figure 6.18 Spring Lake Slope. By Author

Spring Lake Park: Topography

The topography of Spring Lake Park creates a natural bowl. The slope along the southeastern borders rise sharply at 21%. Where the existing baseball field is located, the slope is slight, below 10%. Topography presents an opportunity to integrate seating into the hill. Additionally, because most of the adjacent roads and sidewalks are higher, views can be deliberately focused to park activity but maintain privacy and safety where desired through vegetation and other buffers.

Legend

- Spring Lake Park Boundary
- Over 35% Slope
- 20%-35% Slope
- 15%-20% Slope
- 5%-15% Slope
- 0%-5% Slope

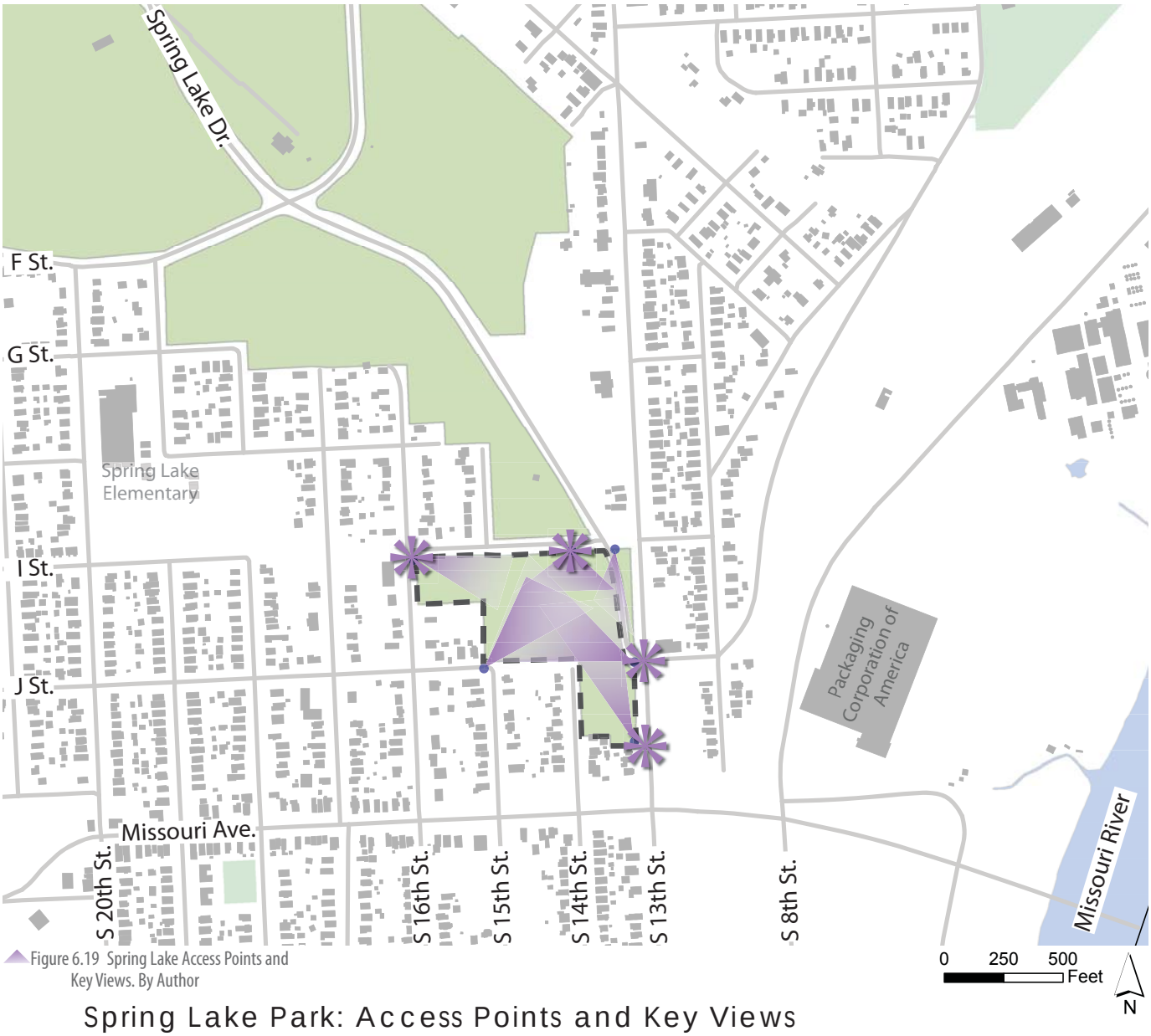


Figure 6.19 Spring Lake Access Points and Key Views. By Author

Spring Lake Park: Access Points and Key Views

The site has one existing main entrance on the northern edge near the parking lot, where the crosswalk connects to the rest of Spring Lake Park. Several other entrances could be implemented to better engage visitors. Additionally, leveraging the close connection to Spring Lake Elementary and implementing a main entrance nearest to the school property allows students to use the site. Access points align with key views into the site and are enhanced through the site's natural topography.

Legend

- Spring Lake Park Boundary
- Spring Lake Park
- Primary Access Points
- Key Views

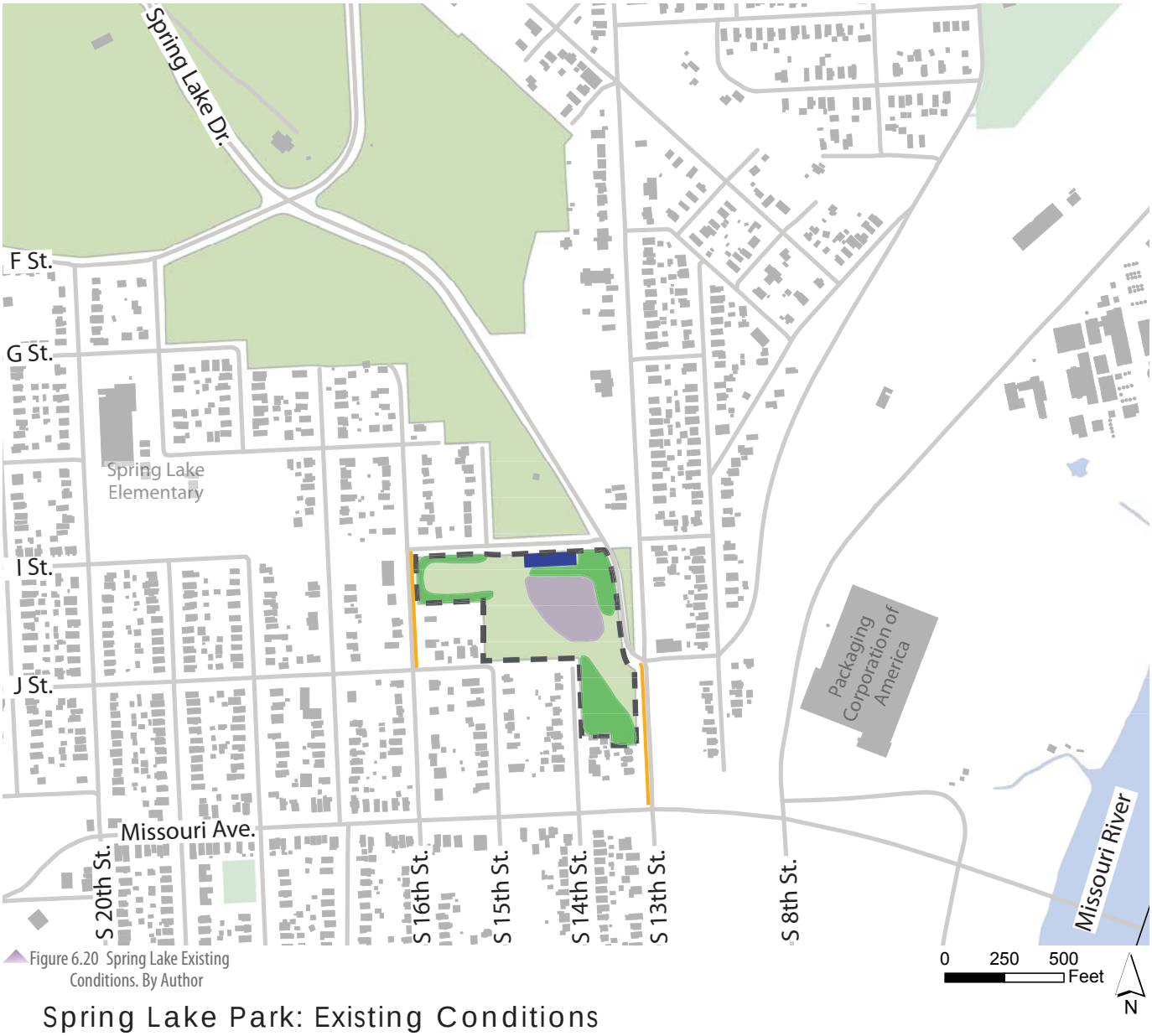


Figure 6.20 Spring Lake Existing Conditions. By Author

Spring Lake Park: Existing Conditions

Spring Lake Park has a baseball field and little other activity. Steep slopes around the edge of the site present a challenge for implementing many active activities but there are opportunities for passive activities. Existing vegetation obscures many views into the park but do buffer views to the parking lot. The trees are mature and provide shade. The parking lot on the northern edge is functional but in poor condition. No interior walking trails exist to connect to the neighborhood sidewalks.

Legend

- Spring Lake Park Boundary
- Pedestrian Circulation
- Undefined Activity
- Defined Active Recreation
- Vegetation
- Site Structures/Parking

Figure 6.21 Spring Lake Park Opportunities and Constraints. By Author

Spring Lake Park: Opportunities and Constraints

The primary challenge with Spring Lake Park is its singular recreational activity offered and limited parking. The ballfield is rarely used and restricts the flexibility of the site for other community activities. Eliminating the field and dedicating the flattest portion of the park to a community space would prove an asset to the Spring Lake neighborhood. Additionally, the steep portions of the site, while limited in activity, could provide a natural amphitheater seating and hiking trails.

Addressing the key access points and views into main park entrances could better engage residents, especially the children from Spring Lake Elementary.

Legend

- Spring Lake Park Boundary
- Pedestrian Connection
- Opportunity Areas
- Constraints
- Street Engagement Areas

Design Strategy, Goals, and Objectives

The design strategy sought to respond to two themes that emerged through interviews, literature, and precedent studies: Range of Recreational Activities and Spatial Organization, Design, and Design Details. Analyzing the site provided the final piece of information that led to the development of design goals and objectives. Design concepts for Lynch and Spring Lake Parks then meaningfully and creatively provided solutions for the goals and objectives as a culmination of the design chapter.

The goal was to redesign the urban park with form, function, and foundation that responded to the unique ethnic composition of South Omaha and still maintain flexible use for all residents and visitors. Objectives further delineated form, function, and foundation deriving from interviews, precedent studies, and literature findings (see Figure 6.22).

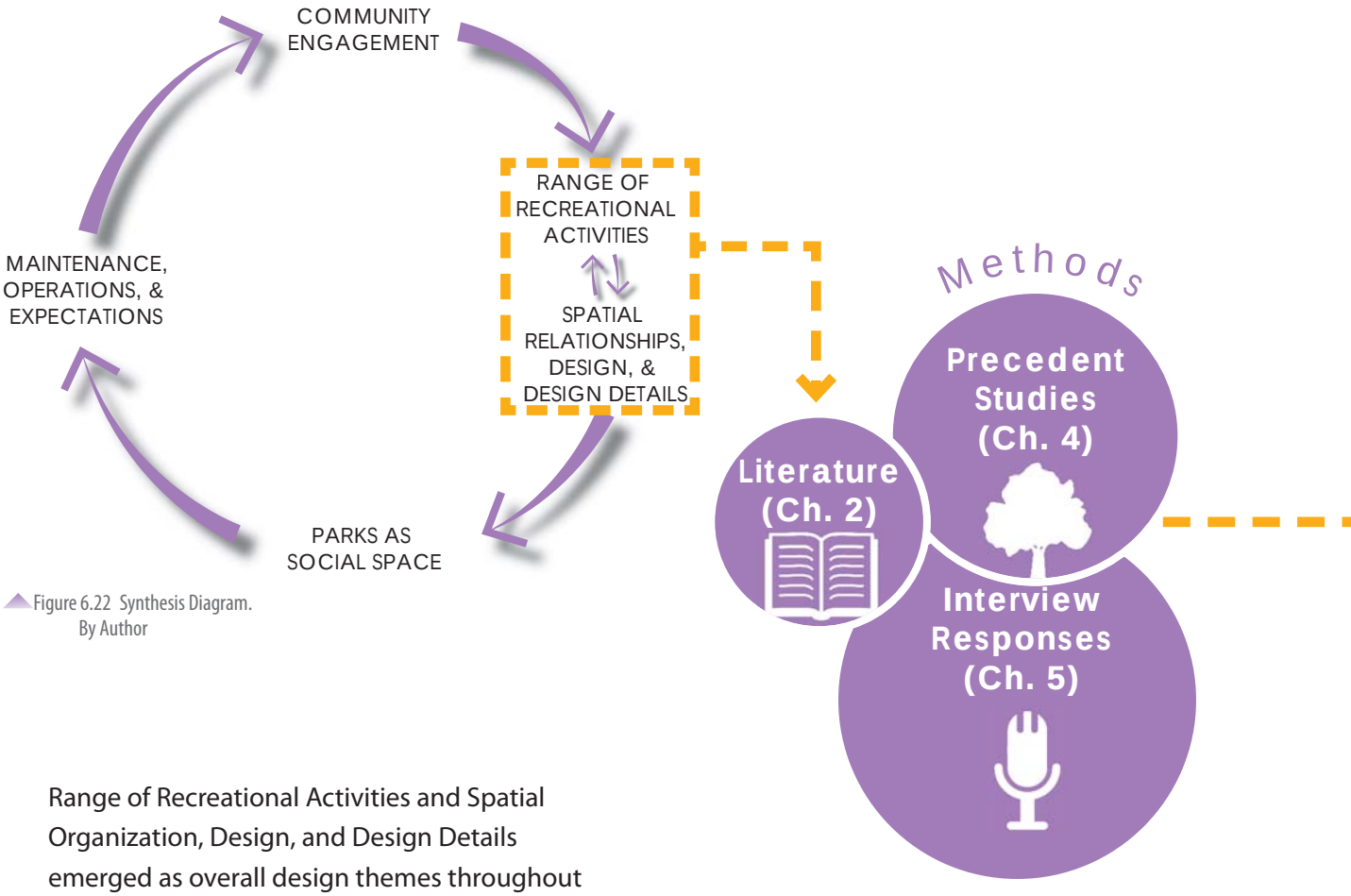


Figure 6.22 Synthesis Diagram. By Author

Range of Recreational Activities and Spatial Organization, Design, and Design Details emerged as overall design themes throughout this research project. These two themes were also developed furthest within this report. To explore opportunities within design and integrate findings, re-visiting information collected in interviews, precedent studies, and literature proved important. The community responses affected design outcomes the most, precedent studies affected design second most strongly, and literature least influenced design.

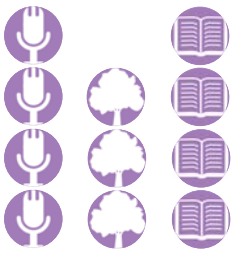
Four to six objectives further define the design goals of Form, Function, and Foundation. Icons to the left of the objectives relate what methods directly contributed to the objective. Drawing direct connections between methods and design validates objectives and allows future researchers to build upon and refine this process.

Methods Used

Goals and Objectives

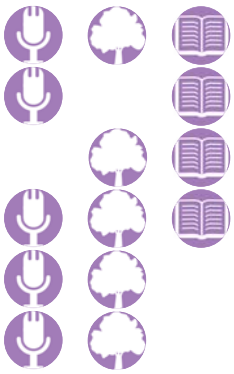
Form

- Respond to ethnic populations through use of color and material
- Provide a comfortable and safe experience for park users
- Establish clear spatial hierarchy in design
- Create 'nodes' that allow for gathering and social interaction



Function

- Create paved gathering spaces to allow for multiple large groups
- Provide large green space for flexible recreational use
- Incorporate various recreational opportunities throughout park
- Implement educational spaces and activities for visitors



Foundation

- Provide programming that activates the park
- Encourage social relationships (strengthen neighborhood fabric)
- Allow for activity throughout day and seasons
- Preserve cultural identity of South Omaha and its ethnic history
- Create connections between park and context
- Celebrate the unique ethnic diversity of South Omaha

Figure 6.23 Lynch Park Concept Plan.
By Author

Lynch Park: Activation through Extension

Key Legend

1. 20th Street Plaza
2. Nature Park
3. Multicultural Plaza
4. Great Lawn
5. Orthogonal Walkways
6. Diagonal Walkways
7. Piccolo's Plaza
8. Main Picnic Pavilions
9. Splash Pad Node
10. Public Art Node
11. Shrub and Flower Planting
12. Soccer and Baseball Fields
13. Seating Berm
14. Sports Seating Pavilions
15. Private Picnic Pavilions & Playground
16. Playground Area
17. Basketball Court
18. Tennis Court
19. Parking Lot
20. Dog Park
21. Concession Stand/Restrooms
22. El Ranchero Restaurant
23. Piccolo Pete's Restaurant
24. Potential Future Development

The Lynch Park redesign concept activates S 20th St. by extending the park into the neighborhood. The design incorporates both traditional Hispanic urban plaza and traditional United States urban park spatial forms. Additionally, active and passive recreational opportunities such as a soccer field, picnic pavilions, and unprogrammed green lawn, promote activation of the space and encourage social interaction on several different platforms.

Because Lynch Park has little curb appeal and few resident houses directly adjacent to the site, the design seeks to draw residents to the park through locating the most socially active spaces on the park edge. Along S 20th St., flexible spaces for both passive and active recreation are offered for events, picnics, festivals, and community activities benefitting both the South Omaha community and city of Omaha. The new redesign also seeks to leverage Piccolo Pete's and El Ranchero, adjacent local businesses. The relationship between Lynch Park and the restaurants

provides outdoor seating for restaurant patrons and creates further visibility for park activities. Future expansion can incorporate other buildings, particularly the industrial buildings along S 20th St. and Michelin Retread Technologies west of Piccolo Pete's. Obtaining those buildings would create a park district, breaking the barriers between residents and Lynch Park and potentially catalyzing further non-industrial development in the area. Pedestrian movement toward the park would become emphasized by extending the park across S 20th St. rather than vehicular movement. Additionally, the Michelin Retread Technology building could serve a huge asset to the park and residents as a community center that vastly expands opportunities for social interaction and amenities at Lynch Park.

The center and west parts of the park provide active recreational activities, preserving one ballfield and integrating a soccer field, a highly desired amenity by the residents of South Omaha and Lynch Park neighborhood. The southern portion of the site (feature 15) maintains existing conditions, but proposes a second pavilion, playground area, and improves circulation between the pavilions and rest of the park, eliminating the steep slope of the existing paths. The topography sets this area apart, allowing for private parties to rent the space for events such as birthdays, Quinceañeras, graduations, or family reunions.

Key nodes at the intersections of walkways were identified from important activities on site, key views, and main access points. Walkways connected those nodes, both through orthogonal (feature 5) and diagonal (feature 6) paths. The paths intentionally intersect, not only to create socially activated gathering spaces but also to preserve sight lines, a key component in Hispanic park design. Every circular node has at least two paths that feed into it and provides seating, creating a highly connected network system and several opportunities for planned and unplanned social interaction between visitors. This aids in strengthening neighborhood relationships, which is a value for Lynch Park Neighborhood Association's leader.

The formally designed park area connects to a nature park area (feature 2) emulating a typical American park. The contrasting meandering walkways and native plants create a variety of experiences for visitors. Material, plant, and color palettes further reflect the ethnic and cultural identities associated with South Omaha around Lynch Park. The descriptions for features one, three, four, and five discuss the cultural connection further. The redesign retains some existing features including the western ballfield, pavilion on the southern hill, and parking lot in the core of the park. Additional parking is proposed along S 20th St. near the main picnic pavilion (feature 8) and nature park.

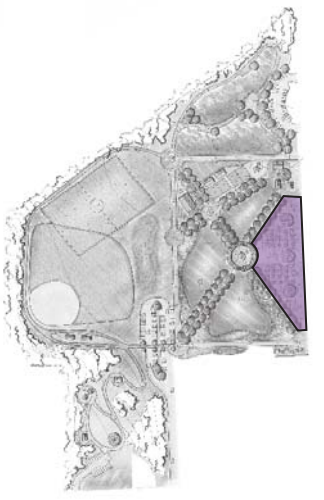
Activating the area beyond the park across S 20th St. by catalyzing adjacent development will draw people into the area. Redefining the activities offered at Lynch Park, both active and passive, and implementing flexible spaces provides a wider range of potential opportunities on site. Additionally, successfully leveraging adjacent businesses, incorporating a community center, and limiting the number of adjacent industrial land uses (by transforming the area into a Business Improvement District) re-envisions Lynch Park beyond the 'typical' American park, becoming an exemplar for other park sites in South Omaha.

Figure 6.24 Proposed S 20th St. Extension. By Author

Figure 6.25 Plaza Farmers Market.
By Meagan

Figure 6.26 Hispanic Heritage Festival.
By SondelBarrio3

1) 20th Street Plaza



20th Street Plaza borders most of the eastern side of Lynch Park. The triangular shaped space, made from concrete pavers (a common material choice in Hispanic plazas), is only sub-divided by three large shade trees to create a highly flexible area. The plaza is edged on two sides by smaller trees along diagonal paths adjacent to the plaza. The third side bleeds into the sidewalk along S 20th St., making it highly visible from the road and residential neighborhoods east of the park. Seating is integrated under the allee of trees and the three large trees encourage use outside of programmed events and draw in passers-by.

This space offers the community an excellent opportunity to integrate new activities such as markets, craft fairs, or festivals, and continue their current events of neighborhood nights out and watermelon feeds. For larger festivals, S 20th St. could close to vehicular traffic, providing a highly pedestrian oriented zone. Future consideration could look to create a Business Improvement District of Lynch Park, S 20th St. and surrounding area to acquire funding for improvements, catalyze other development, and host events.

Figure 6.27 The Meadow at K-State. By Katie Kingery-Page

Figure 6.28 Lurie Garden. By Author

2) Nature Park

The nature park is a less formal design that incorporates a drainage area. Meandering paths made of crushed granite wind through the vegetation, allowing full accessibility for all visitors. Native grasses, wildflowers, and trees are planted in swaths, mimicking the tall and mixed grass prairies of Nebraska. Covered and uncovered seating areas lie adjacent to paths for visitors to sit and enjoy the plants and wildlife that the nature park attracts. Multi-lingual pamphlets and signage at these seating areas educate visitors on the significance and benefits of the native plants. Additionally, the northern loop is separated with a decorative fence to serve as a dog park for the many pet owners in the Lynch Park neighborhood.

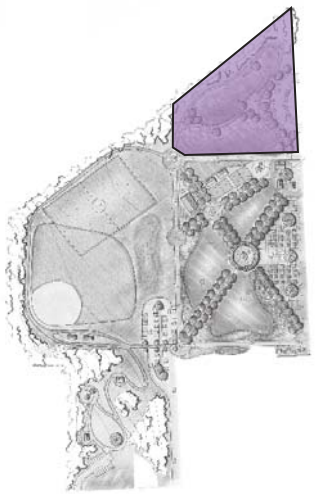


Figure 6.29 Parque Concordia.
By Christina Hernandez

Figure 6.30 Central Alameda Park.
By Frank Hemme

3) Multicultural Plaza

The Multicultural Plaza lies at the western tip of 20th Street Plaza. It is a celebratory space for South Omaha residents to share their culture with their neighbors. At the center of the circular space is a monument, designed and commissioned by the local community. The monument, a strong vertical element, commemorates a significant occurrence or historical figure in South Omaha's past. Concrete pavers are similar to the other intersection nodes in color but different from 20th Street Plaza and pathways. Symbols for each ethnic group in South Omaha are set within the concrete. A circular pergola vertically defines the outside edge. Seating is placed under the pergola, shaded by the structure and providing inward views toward the monument and beyond the space to 20th Street Plaza and Great Lawn.

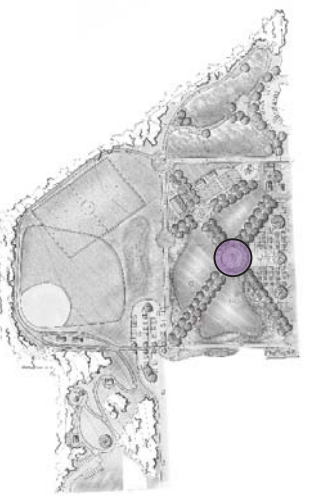
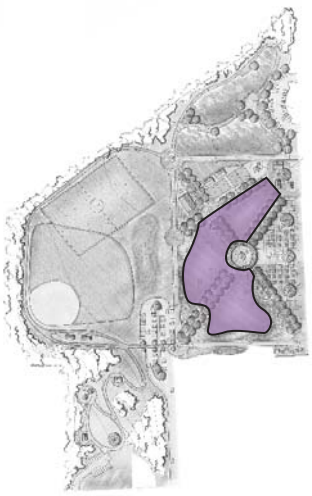


Figure 6.31 Bryant Park. By daneshj

Figure 6.32 Yoga in Cubbon Park. By Adnan Jryomismo

4) The Great Lawn



The Great Lawn spans across three diagonal pathways, providing the largest unprogrammed green space at Lynch Park. Colorful flowers and shrubs border the lawn and at key points allow access into the space. The grassed areas are ideal for community wide events, such as Saturday Yoga in the Park and group or individual activities like picnics, studying, sunbathing, or relaxing. Additionally, the Great Lawn provides space for active recreational activities including pick-up soccer games or practice, frisbee, baseball catch, or tossing around a football. This green space is especially useful if the main fields are occupied or for smaller scale sports events that do not require as much space. During the winter, the Great Lawn could also be active with snowball fights or snowman building.

Figure 6.33 Central Alameda Park.
By Guille Sep

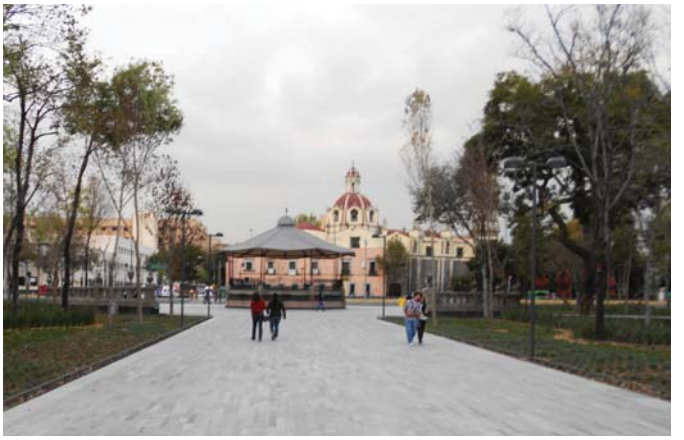
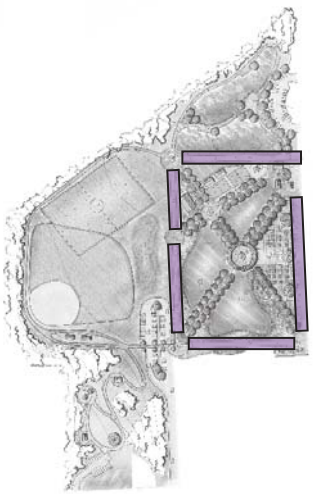


Figure 6.34 Central Alameda Walkway.
By ToNo Drakko

5) Orthogonal Walkways



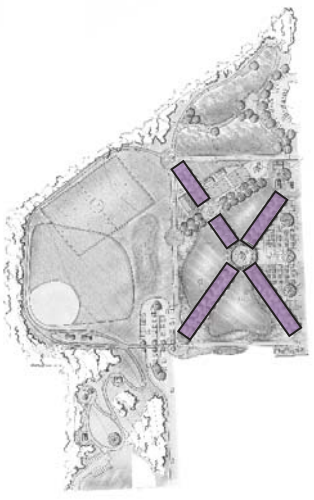
Orthogonal paths in the cardinal directions align with the existing street grid of South Omaha and further activate the edge of the park with entrances and nodes that align with key access points. They are the primary circulation paths through the park and present an urban aesthetic. Keeping the street grid preserves sight lines so the park spaces are visible.

Walkways transition from roads to serve pedestrians inside Lynch Park. The promenade is a complete loop and is 20' wide, enough to accommodate high amounts of foot traffic. Pedestrian scale lights line both sides of the walkways, emulating a typical street while also making the park safe for nighttime use. The paths are made of concrete and are the same color as 20th Street Plaza, unifying the design.

Figure 6.35 Alexandra Park.
By Salim Fadhley

Figure 6.36 Ashworth Holmes Park.
By Jordan Cooper

6) Diagonal Walkways



The diagonal pathways bisect the orthogonal and present a very different experience. Where the orthogonal paths are very open emulating a pedestrian street, the diagonal walkways are narrower (10' wide), more intimate, and offer a natural aesthetic. Each diagonal street is lined with an allee of trees, creating dense shade and an introspective focus. Sight lines are directed toward the intersection nodes and the walker has a definite termination point. The diagonal paths serve as the primary connectors, creating nodes through their intersection with each other and the orthogonal pathways.

Seating is integrated along the paths at an interval that preserves the visitor's privacy. The material of the walkways are concrete pavers similar in color to the orthogonal walkways and 20th St. Plaza. The pavers are spaced so grass can grow between them.

Figure 6.37 Outdoor dining area.
By Dru Bloomfield

Figure 6.38 Street Cafe Seating.
By condesign

7) Piccolo's Plaza

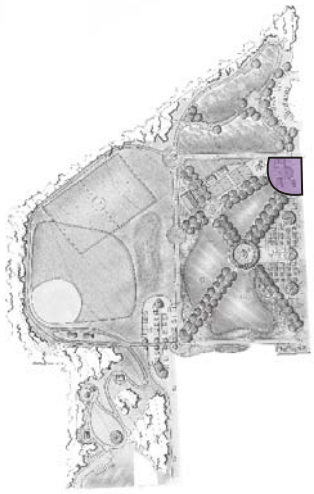
Piccolo's Plaza illustrates how leveraging adjacent businesses such as Piccolo Pete's can activate Lynch Park. The corner where Dorcas St. dead ends into S 20th St. is identified as a key access point, further justifying the restaurant expansion. Extending the restaurant to include an outdoor seating area provides patrons with visibility into the park. Because the restaurant naturally sits at a higher grade, visitors have an elevaated view.

The outdoor dining area is inviting and includes colorful furniture, flowers, and signage to draw people to the restaurant and toward the park. While patrons are eating, they can observe park activities, especially those happening in the Great Lawn. People might then be drawn to the park after their meal. The reverse effect is also possible, where park visitors observe people eating outside and visit the restaurant after their park adventure.

Figure 6.39 Existing structures for picnic pavilions. By Author

Figure 6.40 Sunset Zoo Picnic Counter. By Google Earth

8) Main Picnicking Pavilions



Several areas are allocated for varied picnicking experiences are located throughout Lynch Park (features 8, 14, 15). The design includes several pavilion spaces to alleviate existing competition for limited picnic areas, which was identified as a challenge for residents. The main picnicking pavilion takes advantage of three existing brick structures on site. They are currently vacant and match the character of other businesses along S 20th St. The buildings are also located on axis with where Center St. dead ends into Lynch Park, so the main pavilion area is highly visible and accessible. A large tree sits at the center of the space with benches surrounding, creating a public common area for groups using the pavilions. The pavilions provide movable tables and chairs and built-in brick grills.

Artist studios are another re-purpose option for the structures that would incorporate a commercial outlet for art pieces and financially benefit the park. The studios provide a connection to the Public Art Node (feature 10) and foster a collaboration with El Museo Latino (the first Latino Art & History Museum in the Midwest). Lynch Park could host artists of varied cultures.

Figure 6.41 Spring Lake Park Concept Plan. By Author

Spring Lake Park: A Stage for Culture

The Spring Lake Park redesign concept seeks to provide residents with a unique and flexible public space to support the many activities the community currently does and would like to offer in the future. The concept sets that stage for social activation of Spring Lake Park by providing a number of features that encourage active use. The design objectives are incorporated through an overall sinuous form. The design responds to resident desires while also presenting new features that no other park in South Omaha currently incorporates.

Key Legend

1. Performance Pavilion
2. Front Lawn
3. Amphitheater
4. Lookout Decks
5. Bosque
6. Native Planting Area
7. Private Picnic Pavilions
8. Overlook Pavilions
9. Parking Lot
10. Event Equipment Dropoff
11. Information Kiosk

The Performance Pavilion (feature 1) and Front Lawn (feature 2) are the dominant features at Spring Lake Park. Walkways gradually slope down and circle around a performance space and flexible grass lawn. The former unused baseball field was reallocated to the Performance Pavilion and Front Lawn. Residents currently utilize the baseball outfield for various activities including picnicking, soccer, relaxing, and jogging or running as it is the flattest, least programmed green space on all 36.8 acres of Spring Lake Park. The space also hosts larger events such

as a Mexican circus in the summer. Because people use it as a gathering area already, the design responds to existing use and provides dedicated space by incorporating the Front Lawn to accommodate gatherings and events, both scheduled and impromptu and large or small scale. Activities proposed by interviewees such as summer theater performances, multi-cultural music festivals, or cultural holiday events can occur in addition to continuing existing Spring Lake Park activities at the Performance Pavilion and Great Lawn.

Meandering circulation defines the spaces, responds to the natural topography of the site, and moves visitors toward the central area of activity. As visitors move along the pathways from the east park entrances, a bosque (feature 5) and native vegetation (feature 6) flanks their sides. The contrast between dense tree planting which provides an intimate, shaded experience and the native planting areas which are open and bright offers residents a variety of experiences to match their desired activities. Additionally, native planting provides educational opportunities to learn about the prairie and natural ecosystems of Nebraska, fulfilling a community wish.

The paths originate from key access points onto the site as defined through site analysis (Access Points and Key Views diagram). Walkways braid, converging at key nodes with opportunities for social interaction, seating, and information on community events at the park. The walkways also provide key views from overlook decks directed toward activities at Spring Lake Park.

Because the topography of the site is so dramatic, utilizing the steep slope along the southwestern edge of the site maximizes opportunities for activity at Spring Lake Park. Pathways wind up the hill and lead to pavilion decks with seating and tables. An amphitheater rests at the base of the slope, providing integrated seating that faces the Performance Pavilion and Great Lawn. Currently, children use the large hill for sledding in the winter and rolling down in the summer. However erosion from those activities and natural occurrences degrades vegetation on the hill. Therefore, the

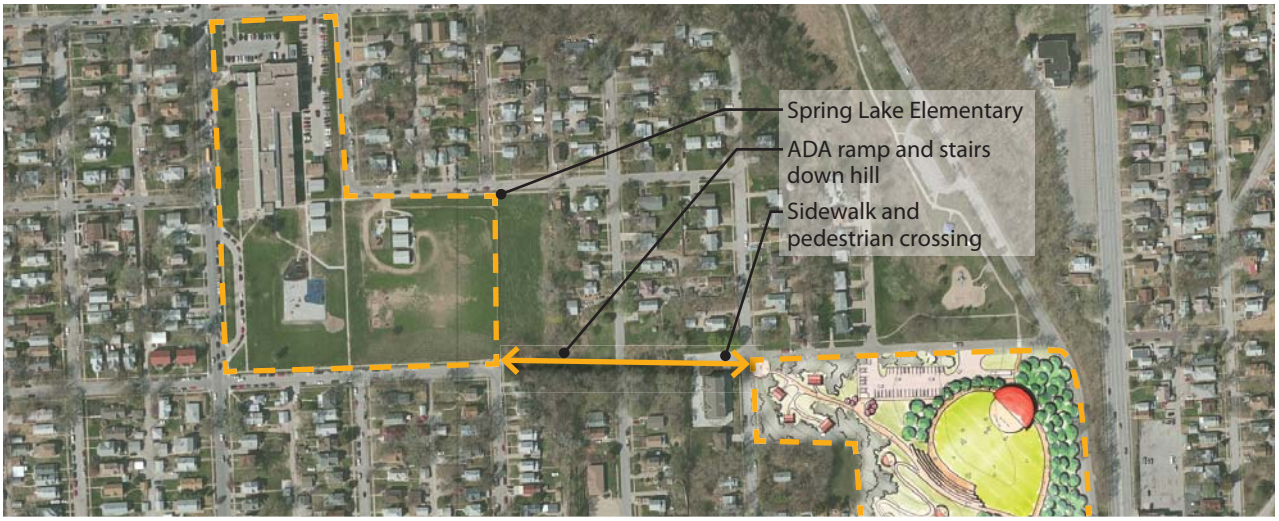


Figure 6.42 Proposed connection between park and Spring Lake Elementary. By Author

proposed design limits highly active recreation that contributes to erosion but utilizes the hill for trails, pavilion decks, and an amphitheater integrated elegantly into the design.

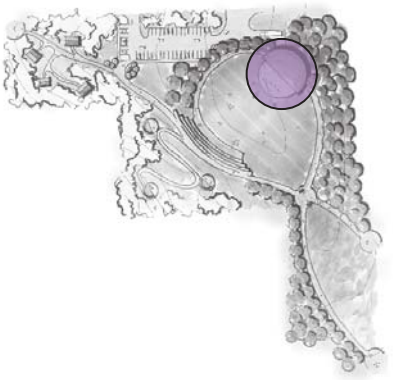
Picnicking is a important activity for the residents around Spring Lake Park, so integrating several areas for gathering in different settings was another key component of the design. The entrance at 16th and I St. leads directly into a private picnic area. Several pavilions are partially screened from each other by trees so they can serve separate groups or one group equally successfully. With the close connection to Spring Lake Park Elementary School, integrating pavilions at the northwest corner of the site benefits those students. A ramp and stairs are proposed for a direct pedestrian connection for students in the shortest and safest route possible. Figure 6.42 illustrates where this proposed linkage occurs. Additional picnic areas are offered at the hillside pavilion decks, on the amphitheater stairs, or on the Front Lawn.

The Spring Lake Park concept provides a variety of spaces and experiences for residents. Major activities residents participated in or desired to participate in such as picnicking, programmed community events, or soccer games can all occur with the proposed improvements. However, the spatial organization is flexible enough to not limit activity and maximize park space. With this adaptability, all residents regardless of cultural background, preferences, or patterns can find a space within Spring Lake Park to fit their recreational needs.

Figure 6.43 Hispanic Fiesta.
By Chris Phutully

Figure 6.44 Bandshell in Sydney.
By Paul Hamilton

1) Performance Pavilion



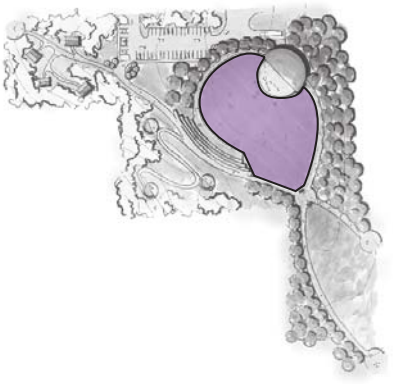
The Performance Pavilion provides a unique feature to Spring Lake Park and South Omaha. Including an outdoor venue opens many opportunities to expand social and community spaces. Several activities mentioned in the interviews such as a multi-cultural music festival or the Mexican Circus can take place in this space. Additionally, residents spoke about desire to expand their social opportunities and integrate more culturally focused events, such as a neighborhood Cinco de Mayo festival. Local businesses and organizations could also use it for small scale events.

The pavilion integrates a main stage which is partially covered overhead. The circular design eliminates undesirable views and opens the performance area up to the Front Lawn. The character matches the overlook decks throughout the park with wood decking for the ground platform and semi-circular overhead structure.

Figure 6.45 Bryant Park. By daneshj

Figure 6.46 Zumba in Millennium Park. By Author

2) Front Lawn



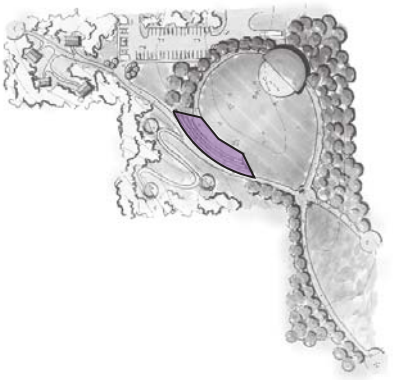
The Front Lawn is the visually dominating feature at Spring Lake Park. The unprogrammed green space provides flexibility to hold a number of different scheduled and impromptu activities. The space is large enough for a soccer practice and small enough that a couple can picnic without feeling overwhelmed by the area. The Front Lawn provides the link between the Performance Pavilion and the amphitheater and is shaped by the winding paths, which curve around this space.

The Front Lawn is the most open and flexible area on site and is intended to support the greatest amount of activity. Therefore, views and circulation are directed toward the lawn from most other park areas to draw in visitors and encourage use outside of programmed events throughout the year.

Figure 6.47 University of Virginia. By Alyson Hurt

Figure 6.48 USFWS Rocky Mountain Amphitheater. By USFWS

3) Amphitheater



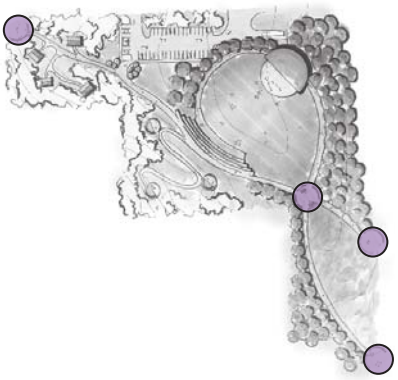
The amphitheater fits into the natural topography and provides seating for any activity occurring in the Great Lawn or at the Performance Pavilion. Stone set into the hillside with grass in between creates an aesthetic that is minimally invasive because it is set into the slope yet the stone ledeges are visible to visitors. The amphitheater sits at the base of the hill with main circulation path braiding behind so to not interrupt people sitting on the terraces.

A concrete paver slab extends from the amphitheater 20' into the Front Lawn. This paved space is designed to accommodate smaller events such as children's plays from Spring Lake Elementary School or a speaker for a community group. The area could also provide additional seating during big events when the amphitheater seating fills.

Figure 6.49 Mulnomah Falls Overlook.
By Keith Daly

Figure 6.50 Durham, North Carolina.
By Terekhova

4) Lookout Decks



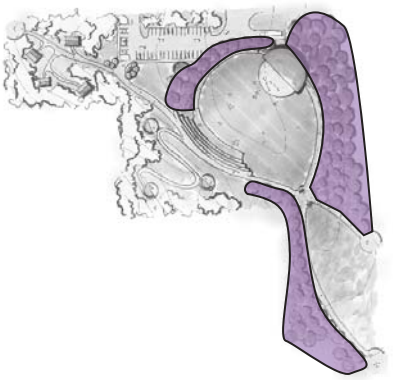
Lookout decks are integrated at key points and slopes to direct views toward the central activity hub: Performance Pavilion and Front Lawn. The decks are stone with railings on the down slope side, set into the landscape, and provide a promontory, different from entrances and nodes throughout the park.

The decks contain seating for visitors and informational kiosks sharing information on community events such as performances or activities scheduled at Spring Lake Park, rental information for the picnic pavilions, and other events and opportunities around South Omaha. Relation of information is multi-lingual and easy to read in order to benefit all visitors regardless of ethnicity, as literature and precedent studies indicated the importance of breaking the language barrier.

Figure 6.51 Woodland Bosque.
By Cata Villacura

Figure 6.52 Bosque a la orilla.
By Carlos Navarro

5) Bosque



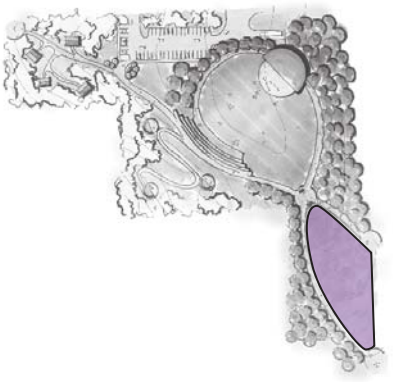
The bosque flanks the native planting area, presenting a direct and strong visual connection between the east park entrances and the Front Lawn. The trees are planted in rows radiating from the braided form of the circulation paths. Although no paths circulate through the bosque, the trees are planted wide enough apart to allow visitors to venture off the path into the tree coverage. The shaded ground is planted with shade tolerant grass and short ground cover to allow walking.

The bosque, while framing the Front Lawn view, also buffers the parking lot and vehicular traffic along Spring Lake Dr. and I St. During performances and events the trees provide a sound barrier to block vehicle noise and visual barrier to mask undesirable views of the parking lot. Attention is focused inward to activity rather than to external distractions.

Figure 6.53 The Meadow at K-State. By Katie Kingery-Page

Figure 6.54 Lurie Garden. By Author

6) Native Planting Area



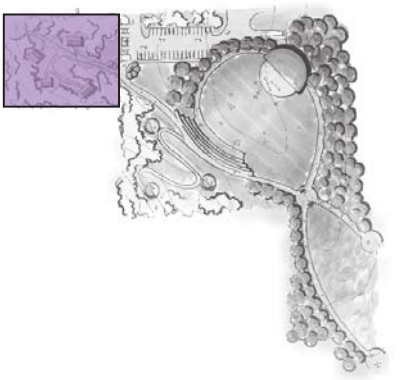
The native planting area between two legs of the braided path presents an unobstructed view from S 13th St. to the Front Lawn and the Performance Pavilion between the bosque. Native grasses and wildflowers are planted in swaths, mimicking the Tall and Mixed Grass prairies of Nebraska and providing stark visual contrast to the lawn. The area acts as a detention area for the site, catching, holding, and infiltrating stormwater from the site. An interviewee expressed desire for a natural and native aesthetic.

To educate visitors on the native planting, stormwater management, and their importance, multi-lingual signage and educational material is located at the lookout decks along the paths surrounding the planted area. This proposal aligns with improvements elsewhere at Spring Lake Park.

Figure 6.56 Parker Miller Park.
By Dwight Burdette

Figure 6.55 Murphy Chandler Park.
By TranceMist

7) Private Picnic Pavilions



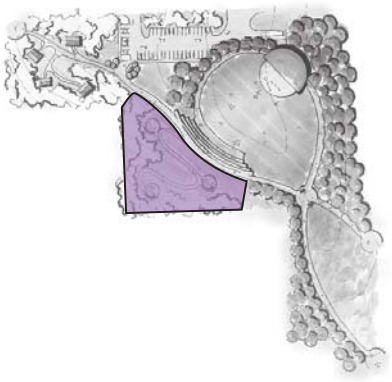
Private picnic pavilions are integrated into natural tree planting on the northeastern corner of the site. Four pavilions are proposed and separated by paths branching off the main circulation route that connects the northwest entrance to the center of the park. The pavilions can be used by individual groups or together for one large party's gathering. Spring Lake Elementary can use the pavilions for class picnics since the school is less than a half mile away from the site. This provides a solution for residents who desired to see more connections between students and the park.

Because the pavilions are set back from the central activity center visually with vegetation and topographically, gatherings can occur in the pavilions while separate events occur at the Performance Pavilion and Front Lawn. This flexibility maximizes the amount and range of activity possible for residents.

Figure 6.57 Occoneechee State Park.
By VA State Park Staff

Figure 6.58 Wind River overlook deck.
By J. Stephen Conn

8) Overlook Picnic Pavilions



Three overlook picnic pavilions are built into the hillside. The pavilions provide a different picnic experience than the private pavilions located in the northwest corner. Because these features double as overlook decks, they are highly visual both looking into and from the pavilions. However, because they are set into the hill and a single path leads to and from the pavilions, they still retain a sense of privacy. These spaces are ideal when larger events occur at the park. An occupant of the overlook pavilion can see the entirety of the central activity space.

These pavilions employ an overhead structure that is similar to the Performance Pavilion to establish a design unity between the features. They also incorporate the same stone and railing system as the overlook decks.

Chapter Summary

Design plans for Lynch and Spring Lake Parks are the culmination of research and analysis that push the boundaries for current urban parks in South Omaha. The design pays particular attention to the ethnic composition of South Omaha and the specific Lynch Park and Spring Lake Park neighborhoods.

The master plan concepts presented are one interpretation of the goals and objectives established in this research project. The two designs are by no means the only correct answer or solution. The goal was to provide a conceptual interpretation to catalyze and guide dialogue through providing concrete, inspiring examples illustrating the great potential for urban parks in South Omaha. The alternatives sought to respond to a specific population, ethnic composition, and neighborhood. Both concepts are mindful of existing conditions, but ultimately aim to create a vision beyond physical park boundaries and extend the urban park further into the neighborhood fabric.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSIONS

Introduction

The final chapter discusses recommendations as a result of the research, findings, and design. The recommendations use the process framework presented in Chapter 6. This chapter also seeks to outline future research building on this project and limitations faced within this project's scope. Lastly, a final thoughts section culminates the report and project by revisiting and responding to the initial research question.

Recommendations

Community Engagement

Connect with the community at their central locations.

One challenge discussed with community engagement in the design process is lack of attendance from ethnic minority groups. Often, the main attendees of project charrettes, open houses, or informational meetings were European American. Parks Department and neighborhood association members both mentioned a desire to see increased participation from minority groups. One technique to better engage minorities is to conduct meetings in locations where they frequent. Core meeting locations for ethnic groups identified through interviews included churches, schools, and local businesses.

Engage early, often, and effectively.

During public meetings, incorporating bilingual communication (in advertisements, signage, and meeting minutes) or the presence of interpreters to aid in discussion could reduce language barriers, cultural differences, and encourage ethnic minority participation. Overall, finding a location that is easily accessible and creating an atmosphere where community members involved feel comfortable is critical to promote participation in the design process. Additionally, building relationships with members of the minority groups would help to engage community residents to help publicize and gain support for public projects. Seeking participation could become significantly easier when someone of the minority ethnic group invites fellow community members to design events and engagement continues throughout the design process.

Understand community demographics, preferences, and patterns.

Understanding the community is critical. Designers, consultants, and parks department or neighborhood association members should research and communicate with community leaders to understand the demographic around a project site and how best to work with residents. Their preferences and desires can and should inform not just design elements, but social events, maintenance plans and operations. If a community feels engaged

within the process and sees their concerns and opinions incorporated within the final products, residents may feel a stronger attachment to the place. Place attachment leads to increased use, and indicates a successful urban space.

Range of Recreational Activities/Spatial Relationships, Design, & Design Details

The design process is iterative and incorporates community values.

The purpose and importance of community engagement is to continually strive to respond to the values established from the community engagement process. Revisiting the users and checking their values, preferences, and patterns against design concept iterations ensures that the final proposal is the best fit for the community and therefore encouraging the park's success early on.

Unprogrammed and flexible space is a designer's key to success.

In communities where preferences and patterns are varied, incorporating unprogrammed and flexible spaces are key. Areas with little specified program promote multiple activities, and visitors can utilize the space as they need to fit their recreational needs. Additionally, flexible spaces can be used as a whole for a large community event or subdivided for smaller scale activity.

Parks as Social Space

Programmed community activities at the park encourage continued use.

People attract people. For ethnic groups where social life is important to the ethnicity, such as the Hispanic American culture, spaces that allow for social activity become critical. In addition to providing space, actively scheduling events that could draw visitors would encourage social interaction. Existing activities (including neighborhood nights out, watermelon feeds, and a Mexican circus) and proposed activities (such as a multi-cultural music festival, community gardens, or outdoor educational workshops) were mentioned within interviews by community leaders. The designs responded to those comments by providing dedicated flexible space for the activities at each park location.

Utilize local organizations to schedule events at the park.

Social programming is the next step. Some urban parks, such as Grand Park in Los Angeles, have full time event planners to coordinate larger scale activities for visitors (grandparkla.org, 2015). Since Lynch Park, Spring Lake Park, and most South Omaha urban parks are much smaller than Grand Park, justifying the hire of an events coordinator for a small scale park would be difficult. However, the task could fall to the neighborhood or other active community groups. In interviews, I discovered that many associations already assume this scheduling role and plan community activities such as "neighborhood night out." However, providing the groups with a defined process framework for how to plan events and considerations to keep in mind could improve resident participation.

Community engagement and understanding residents' cultural backgrounds again proves critical. For example, if an ethnic group has important cultural festivals, providing them with an opportunity to use local park space for that event would strengthen the community and promote education concerning other ethnic groups. Overall, the encouraging gathering and social activity is a high priority for South Omaha residents and community leaders. As the community continues to grow, a need to accommodate increasingly diverse groups within urban parks increases. Parks are highly public so they provide an excellent foundation for a social platform that strengthens residents' relationships, helps preserve cultural identities, and celebrates the diversity of South Omaha.

The appendix provides a calendar of Latin American and United States holidays and identifies which events could occur at Lynch Park or Spring Lake Park in South Omaha.

Maintenance, Operations, and Expectations

Train knowledgeable and multi-lingual park staff.

Maintenance and upkeep are difficult tasks within parks, particularly those that are highly used. Too little budget, too few employees,

and too short of a maintenance season are all challenges many parks departments face, Omaha's included. On the other side of the issue, park visitors experience outdated and in disrepair equipment and unappealing upkeep such as overflowing trash cans. While maintenance was not a topic researched within the scope of this project, because the topic arose so strongly within interviews, this as an area of importance and future research.

Discrimination was not a topic that was mentioned in interviews. However, both research and precedent studies spoke about ethnic groups, particularly minorities, who experience discrimination. I felt it necessary to address the topic with safety, an important urban park operation. Also since interviews were only with community leaders, it is possible discrimination occurs with park visitors outside interviewees' knowledge. Neither Lynch Park nor Spring Lake Park have full time on-site staff. While an on-site staff member could increase safety and perhaps improve cleanliness of the parks, the scale of most of the parks in South Omaha is not feasible to implement such an employee. However, any city employee or law enforcement staff that has contact with park visitors should be mindful of how they conduct interactions with all cultures, but particularly ethnic minority groups.

Police and park supervisors should train their staff to be sensitive to the various ways ethnic groups participate in parks, focusing on ethnic groups in the area. Additionally, hiring multi-lingual staff and providing multi-lingual documents on park policies could help ethnic minority participants feel more comfortable in the park environment. Investigating the quantity, quality of facilities, services, programs, and staff that serve various ethnic groups most would provide a comprehensive overview that informs the most effective and ethnic sensitive maintenance and training plans.

Maintenance plans should respond to ethnic group expectations.

Challenges and misconceptions between staff, law enforcement, and park visitors could

potentially be avoided if a greater understanding of ethnic group expectations and variances between groups was made available to those involved with parks. These people include Parks and Recreation Department staff, neighborhood and community leaders, residents, and designers. For South Omaha, those expectations began to appear through the interviews conducted, particularly for the Hispanic American ethnic group, although they are not representative of the entire South Omaha Hispanic American community. While there are many variables that present exceptions to the research noting certain preferences and patterns for specific ethnic groups, the important takeaway is that people participate in parks differently, which should influence design. Finding what those unique characteristics are and responding through maintenance and operations plans could increase park success and visitor and ethnic minority participation rates.

Limitations

The main limitation with this research lies in the interview method and time frame. Although interviews conducted spanned across South Omaha (Figure 5.1), all were with community leaders. The level of detail in responses was high, however, and could be improved with more interviews. The second limitation was time and weather. Direct observation would highly impact results and understanding of existing activities at urban parks. Because the site analysis phase took place in winter months, existing features and amenities were usually the only items to note. People were not using the parks in the cold temperature, and therefore, I was not able to directly observe many people using the parks.

Future Research

Interviews with park visitors in parks during peak use in the summer months is a suggested area of further research. Interviewees in future research would represent many ethnic groups, levels of assimilation in the United States, and have varied family backgrounds. My interviews provided an overall view of leisure style patterns and preferences for South Omaha residents. A comprehensive understanding through more interviews over a longer period of time throughout different seasons, days of the week, and times of day would serve to better understand South Omaha residents' preferences at a neighborhood or park scale. Specific ethnic group preferences and patterns could become apparent thus avoiding generalizing larger population groups with fewer interviews.

Future research is also suggested to further develop the five themes, particularly the three not addressed through design (Community Engagement, Parks as Social Space, and Maintenance, Operations, and Expectations). Because the focus of this research topic was to identify design considerations and present concepts, three themes are comparatively underdeveloped. With a strong foundation of knowledge and research supporting all five themes, landscape architects and park department staff can utilize and respond to diverse ethnic groups better.

The ideal outcome of this research is to produce a handbook revolving around designing urban parks with a diverse community in mind. A publicly accessible, easy to read and understand document would best serve those interested and involved with urban parks, designer or other profession. However, this document should be developed after designs such as the ones I propose are implemented and verified to meet the needs of the Hispanic American users and community. The research begun in this project could then extend beyond South Omaha to other cities both nationally and internationally.

Final Thoughts

How can existing urban parks in South Omaha, an area with a diverse ethnic population, be redesigned to better suit the preferences of the cultural community and still maintain flexible use?

The exploratory research in this project supports design with community in mind for highly ethnic diverse areas such as South Omaha. The community interviews highly influenced design considerations (goals and objectives). Ultimately, the spaces that best suited the preferences of various ethnic groups (without excluding others) were unprogrammed and open. In addition to the large lawns on both Lynch Park and Spring Lake Park design proposals, each site offered smaller, more intimate spaces as well. Illustrating one list of goals and objectives and two park designs in response to that common list illustrates the flexibility of the goals and concepts.

This project presented a methodology that included research, precedent studies, and site analysis and inventory to influence design. The concepts presented are one solution, but I hope to begin a dialogue to refine the goals and objectives to better suit other park sites with similar challenges. However, I do believe that the concepts presented in this chapter successfully show how two parks in South Omaha can be redesigned to suit the diverse ethnic users without compromising flexibility.

Ethnicity is one important consideration among many that should be integrated into urban park design. Successful urban park design ultimately responds to the community and its diversity, keeping in mind, but not singling out ethnicity. As the United States continues to diversify, community-oriented design is increasingly important to landscape architects.

Figure 7.1 Millennium Park.
By Author
Figure 7.2 Cinco de Mayo Festival.
By dbking
Figure 7.3 Parque Concordia.
By Christina Hernandez
Figure 7.4 Central Alameda Park.
By Frank Hemme

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Chapter One

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Chapter Seven

Figure 7.1 Leise, K. (photographer). (2014). *Millennium Park*. [photograph]

Figure 7.2 Barrera, R. (photographer). (2013). *Dancers perform elaborate songs from various regions in Mexico under the outdoor stage*. [photograph] Retrieved March 20, 2015, from: http://photoblog.statesman.com/2013/09

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Appendix

Figure 8.1 Leise, K. (creator). (2014). *Holiday Calendar.* [diagram] from: Adobe Illustrator

Figure 8.2 - Figure 8.31 Leise, K. (photographer). (2014). *South Omaha Park Existing Site Conditions*. [photograph]

APPENDIX

Glossary

A

-acculturation: values and modes of behavior of the new host culture that are gradually incorporated into an ethnic group's culture (Sasidharan et al., 2005)

-active recreation: "structured individual or team activity that requires the use of special facilities, courses, fields, or equipment" (EPA, n.d.)

-African: "a person having origins in any of the Black racial groups of Africa. It includes people who indicate their race as "Black, African Am., or Negro" or...African American, Kenyan, Nigerian, or Haitian" (US Census Bureau, 2011)

-African American: see African

-Anglo-Conformity: ethnic groups becoming integrated into the Anglo-American lifestyle causing preferences and behaviors to change. Ethnic groups progressively lose their cultural roots and adopt Anglo-Americans' (Gramann, 1996)

-Anglo-Saxon: see Caucasian

-Asian: "a person having origins in any of the original peoples of the Far East, Southeast Asian, or the Indian subcontinent, including, for example, Cambodia, China, India, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Pakistan, the Philippine Islands, Thailand, Vietnam. It includes people indicate their race as "Asian" or...Asian Indian, Chinese, Filipino, Korean, Japanese, and Vietnamese" (US Census Bureau, 2011)

-assimilation: see acculturation

C

-Caucasian: "a person having origins in any of the original peoples of Europe, the Middle East, or North Africa. It includes people who indicate their race(s) as "White" or...Irish, German, Italian, Lebanese, Arab, or Moroccan" (US Census Bureau, 2011)

E

-ethnicity: a term relating to culture and personal identity to a culture to which one is familiar. Ethnic groups share common roots in language, values, traditions, nationality, or genealogy (Cheng, 2003; Freund, 2003)

-ethnic minority group: groups of people who differ in…national, religious, or cultural origin from the dominant group—often the majority population—of the country in which they live (Chaiklin, 2014). Sasidharan et al. (2005) notes that ethnic minority groups are often "subordinate groups [that] 'are in conflict over scarce resources, which may relate to power, favorable occupational position, [and] educational opportunity'"

-ethnicity participation theory: one theory describing leisure recreation participation by ethnic groups. The theory discusses cultural norms and values as the major factor in ethnic group participation in urban parks and open space. As people immigrate, they bring the values, practices, and lifestyles of their ancestral countries, and present a mosaic of backgrounds that drive preferences for activity and amenities in urban parks (Carr & Williams, 1993).

H

-Hispanic: "a person of Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican, South or Central American, or other Spanish culture or origin regardless of race" (U.S. Census Bureau, 2011)

I

-Indigenous Peoples of Americas: "a person having origins in any of the original peoples of North and South America (including Central America) and who maintains tribal affiliation or community attachment" and "a person having origins in any of the original peoples of Hawaii, Guam, Samoa, or other Pacific Island" (US Census Bureau, 2011)

L

-leisure: "state of mind which ordinarily is characterized by un-obligated time and willing optimism. It can involve extensive activity or no activity. The key ingredient is an attitude which fosters a peaceful and productive co-existence with the elements in one's environment" (CSUN, 2014)

-leisure recreation: passive or active activities people pursue in their un-obligated time

M

-marginality participation theory: one theory explaining leisure recreation participation by ethnic groups. The theory explains under-participation of ethnic minority groups relating to low socioeconomic status, lack of access to desired facilities, and discrimination (Carr and Williams, 1993 and Rishbeth, 2001).

P

-park: [working definition] publicly accessible, maintained space for people to recreate that promotes social and environmental interaction while providing for various passive and active recreation opportunities

-passive recreation: "recreational activities that do not require prepared facilities like sports fields or pavilions" (EPA, n.d.)

R

-race: often associated with a person's physical appearance. Skin color, eye and lip shape, and bone structure can indicate a person's race (Conley, 2003). Race is a unitary trait, a genetic makeup shared by a group that cannot be chosen. Beyond physical traits, race can, to lesser degree, be associated with intelligence or health, though little evidence supports these claims (Diffen, 2014).

-recreation: "experiences and activities chosen and pursued by the individual in his/her free time..."re-creates the individual so that he/she may be refreshed to enable him/her to resume daily obligations" (CSUN, 2014)

S

-socioeconomic status: "conceptualized as the social standing or class of an individual or group. It is often measured as a combination of education, income, and occupation. Examinations of socioeconomic status often reveal inequities in access to resources plus issues related to privilege, power , and control" (APA, 2014)

Hispanic & U.S.A. Holiday Calendar

Hispanic Holiday
United States Holiday
Dual Holiday

*Holidays suggested to incorporate as events at Lynch Park and Spring Lake Park

January

1 - New Years Day*
1 - Haiti Independence Day
6 - Reyes Magos: 3 Kings Festival*
19 - Martin Luther King Jr. Birthday
24 - Alasitas: Aymara Festival of Abundance (Bolivia)

February

2 - La Candelaria*
- Carnival
12 - Chile Independence Day
14 - Valentine's Day
17 - George Washington Birthday

March

- Vendimia Harvest (Argentina)
- Carnival
- Semana Santa: Holy Week*
- Lent

April

- Semana Santa: Holy Week
- Lent
- Easter

May

1 - Dia del trabajo: Labor Day*
5 - Cinco de Mayo: The Day of the Battle of Puebla*
10 - Mother's Day
25 - Memorial Day

June

21 - Father's Day*
24 - Inti-Raymi: Festival of the Sun (Peru)

July

4 - United States Independence Day*
5 - Venezuela Independence Day
9 - Argentina Independence Day
20 - Colombia Independence Day
28 - Peru Independence Day

August

6 - Bolivia Independence Day
10 - Ecuador Independence Day
15 - Assumption of Mary
25 - Uruguay Independence Day

September

- Hispanic Heritage Month
7 - Brazil Independence
7 - Labor Day
15 - Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador Nicaragua, Costa Rica Independence Day *
16 - Mexico Independence*
20 - Cuba Independence
- Mistura Food Festival (Peru)

October

12 - Columbus Day
12 - Hispanic Day (Spain)*
18 - El Senor de los Milagros: Lord of Miracles (Lima, Peru)

November

1 - All Saints Day
2 - Dia de los Muertos: Day of the Dead*
2 - All Souls Day
11 - Veteran's Day*
25 - Paraguay Independence Day
28 - Panama Independence
28 - Thanksgiving

December

6 - Constitution Day (Spain)
12 - Virgen de Guadalupe: Virgin of Guadalupe
- Posadas/Novenas*
24 - Christmas Eve
25 - Christmas Day
31 - New Year's Eve

Figure 8.1 Holiday Calendar. By Author

Lynch Park: Existing Site Photographs

Figure 8.2 By Author

Figure 8.3 By Author

Figure 8.4 By Author

Figure 8.5 By Author

Figure 8.6 By Author

Figure 8.7 By Author

Lynch Park: Existing Site Photographs

Figure 8.8 By Author

Figure 8.9 By Author

Figure 8.10 ByAuthor

Figure 8.12 ByAuthor

Figure 8.11 ByAuthor

Figure 8.13 ByAuthor

Spring Lake Park: Existing Site Photographs

Figure 8.14 By Author

Figure 8.15 By Author

Figure 8.16 By Author

Figure 8.18 By Author

Figure 8.17 By Author

Figure 8.19 By Author

Spring Lake Park: Existing Site Photographs

Figure 8.20 By Author

Figure 8.21 By Author

Figure 8.22 By Author

Figure 8.24 By Author

Figure 8.23 By Author

Figure 8.25 By Author

South Omaha Parks: Existing Site Photographs

Figure 8.26 By Author

Figure 8.27 By Author

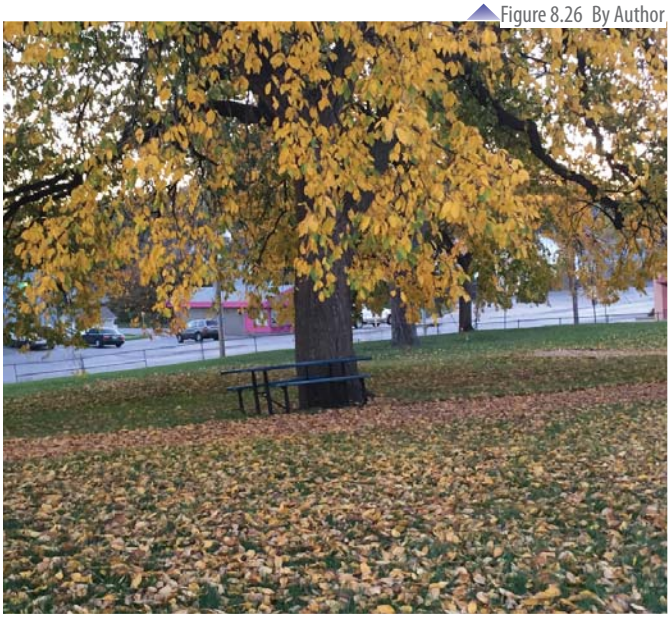

Figure 8.28 By Author

Figure 8.30 By Author

Figure 8.29 By Author

Figure 8.31 By Author

Representative Interview Questions

Interview Goals:

-Understand current park and activity participation; amenity and aesthetic preferences from a representative who can speak for a community or cultural group

-Understand what community members like, dislike, and desire for parks in South Omaha as a whole and what the community values and prefers collectively

-To establish relative relevance for this research and understand priority for this project in South Omaha

Interview Questions:

General Information

1. Where is this interview taking place?
    A. In a park
    B. In an area close to a park
    C. In a community building
    D. Other: _____
2. Who do you represent?
    Community group: _____
    Cultural group: _____
    Neighborhood group: _____
    Park Staff: _____
    Other: _____
3. How often does your group meet?
4. Is your group primarily organized around geography, a culture, or an issue/interest?

Establishing Relative Importance

5. Are parks important to your group?
    A. If so, has your group discussed park issues, concerns, use, or activities? What was discussed?
    B. If so, where do parks rank on priority with other issues your group addresses?
    C. If not, do you see your group as potentially becoming interested in this topic if they knew about this research? ('this topic' being park design driven by ethnicity and 'this research' being my literature and general information indicating how ethnic groups use parks differently)
    D. If not, what are the primary concerns for your group regarding the physical community? Have you noticed a change in concerns through history?
6. Do you see current park conditions, design, or use meeting the needs of your group?
7. Would it be beneficial for your group to establish a means of communicating with the Omaha Parks & Rec Department to bring up concerns and issues? If so, what would be the most effective method?

Activity Preferences

8. What types of park activities seem most popular for your group?
9. Do religious/cultural festivals/events occur in your park? If so, what festivals/events?
10. What are the most important features or items that parks could implement that would best serve your group?

Cultural/Ethnic Preferences

11. What ethnicity do you identify most strongly with?
12. What activities specifically associated with your ethnic/cultural group could be supported by parks?
13. What visual preferences may be specifically associated with your ethnic/cultural group? How might parks support these preferences?
14. How do you think the park could be improved to meet your specific ethnic/cultural groups' needs?
15. Have you ever thought about park design/layout, appearance, and activities that might be associated with cultural/ethnic needs? If so, how?
16. Are meeting cultural/ethnic needs an ongoing priority for your group? If so, please explain.

Individual Interview Questions

Interview Goals:

-Understand current park and activity participation; amenity and aesthetic preferences

-Understand what community members like, dislike, and desire for parks in South Omaha

Interview Questions:

Park Participation

1. Have you visited parks in South Omaha in the last year? If so, which parks?
2. What parks in South Omaha do you visit most often? (provide graphic showing park locations)
3. How often do you visit your favorite parks in South Omaha? (per week, which season)
4. How long does it take you to walk to your preferred park?
    A. Within a 5 minute walk; or approximately 3 blocks or less
    B. Within a 5-15 minute walk; or approximately 3 - 9 blocks
    C. Over 15 minute walk; or I drive because it's too far to walk
5. Whom do you go to the parks with (if anyone) most often?
6. How long is your typical park visit?
7. What age range do you fall in?
    A. Under 20
    B. 20 – 35
    C. 35 – 50
    D. 50 – 65
    E. Over 65

General Park Preferences

8. What do you like best about the your park?
9. What do you most dislike about your park?
10. If you could have anything offered at this/these parks, what would those things be? (i.e. typical' basketball courts, soccer field, pavilion space and/or 'non-typical' zip lines, ferris wheel)
11. What is the best urban park you have visited? What qualities appealed to you?

Activity Participation/Preferences

12. What do you, your family, or friends most typically do when you go to the park?
13. Do you picnic at parks in South Omaha?
    A. Who do you picnic with?
    B. Do you prepare homemade or buy pre-made food to serve at your picnics?
    C. How do you normally serve/eat food at picnics (leave food out for buffet or single meal?)
14. Do you play or watch sports at parks? If so, which sports?

15. Have you participated in or seen cultural or religious festivals in South Omaha parks? If so, which?
16. Would you participate in water activities if parks offered them? (examples: pool, splash pad, etc.)

Visual Preferences

17. When you are enjoying the park, is visual quality more, about the same, or less important compared to recreational or cultural activities?

Relation to Nature

19. How do you interact with nature when you visit parks? (i.e. highly: bird watching, tree climbing, fishing, sitting on the ground or little: picnic benches, use park pavilions over grass, little interaction with wildlife or plants)
20. What types of nature-based activities, if any, do you engage in and enjoy?
21. Overall, do you spend more park time doing things related to nature or recreation/social interaction?

Cultural/Ethnic Preferences

22. What ethnicity do you identify most strongly with? (provide list of ethnicities)
23. What activities that may be specifically associated with your ethnic/cultural group are present or absent?
24. What visual preferences that may be specifically associated with your ethnic/cultural group are present or absent?
25. How do you think the park could be improved to meet your specific ethnic/cultural groups' needs?
26. Have you ever thought about park design/layout, appearance, and activities associated to cultural/ethnic needs? If so, in what ways?
27. Do these cultural/ethnic needs matter to you? If so, how?

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY | University Research Compliance Office

TO: Howard Hahn
LARCP
102B Seaton

Proposal Number: 7453

FROM: Rick Scheidt, Chair
Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects

DATE: 11/26/2014

RE: Proposal Entitled, "Revisiting South Omaha: park design for an evolving demographic"

The Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects / Institutional Review Board (IRB) for Kansas State University has reviewed the proposal identified above and has determined that it is EXEMPT from further IRB review. This exemption applies only to the proposal - as written – and currently on file with the IRB. Any change potentially affecting human subjects must be approved by the IRB prior to implementation and may disqualify the proposal from exemption.

Based upon information provided to the IRB, this activity is exempt under the criteria set forth in the Federal Policy for the Protection of Human Subjects, **45 CFR §46.101, paragraph b, category: 2, subsection: ii.**

Certain research is exempt from the requirements of HHS/OHRP regulations. A determination that research is exempt does not imply that investigators have no ethical responsibilities to subjects in such research; it means only that the regulatory requirements related to IRB review, informed consent, and assurance of compliance do not apply to the research.

Any unanticipated problems involving risk to subjects or to others must be reported immediately to the Chair of the Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects, the University Research Compliance Office, and if the subjects are KSU students, to the Director of the Student Health Center.

203 Fairchild Hall, Lower Mezzanine, Manhattan, KS 66506-1103 | 785-532-3224 | fax: 785-532-3278 | k-state.edu/research/comply