



Mill Creek Canyon Earthworks Park Framework Plan—

FEBRUARY 2024

CITY OF KENT



MITHŪN



Land Acknowledgment

In this process, we want to acknowledge that the City of Kent and all its parks sit on the lands of the Duwamish, Muckleshoot, and Coast Salish peoples, whose ancestors have lived here since time immemorial. We are grateful for their stewardship of this land, and we give respect to the many indigenous people who continue to flourish here.

Table of Contents

Graphic Novel

Kent's Canyon of Possibilities: A Journey Through A Reimagined Mill Creek
Canyon Earthworks Park..... 6

Executive Summary

Project Vision + Goals..... 30
Public Engagement..... 34
Assessment..... 38
Park-Wide Improvement Strategies..... 52
Implementation..... 58

Framework Plan

Introduction 64
Park-Wide Improvement Strategies..... 66
 Regional Connectivity..... 72
 Neighborhood Connectivity..... 76
 Park Access + Trails..... 80
 Park Improvement Amenities 84
 Mill Creek + Stormwater..... 88
 Natural Resources..... 92
Site Improvements 96
 Trail System 98
 Earthworks 106
 Meadow..... 108
 Plateau..... 110
 Forest Canopy..... 112
 Upstream 114
Implementation..... 116

Appendices

Appendix A: Summary of Prior Studies..... 124
Appendix B: Site Analysis Assessment 132
Appendix C: Public Engagement Activities 182
Appendix D: 2022 Civil Engineering Report 214
Appendix E: Historical Timeline and Cultural Assessment 224



Acknowledgments

In appreciation for the City of Kent's Advisory Team, the Technical Advisory Group, and the Community for providing support, insights and advice to advance the inclusive value of recreation and natural resources in this diverse region.

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Mithun

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Graphic Novel—



Kent's

CANYON OF CONNECTIONS

A Journey to the Future
Through a Fully Realized
Mill Creek Canyon
Earthworks Park



**KENT
PARKS**

MITHŪN

KENT'S CANYON OF CONNECTIONS

A Journey to the Future Through a Fully
Realized Mill Creek Canyon Earthworks Park

ABOUT

This graphic novel is a part of the City of Kent's Mill Creek Canyon Earthworks Park Framework Plan, which is the first step in a long-term reinvestment plan to support canyon improvements for Kent's growing and diverse community.

The story takes us through a future Mill Creek Canyon Earthworks Park where fictional characters experience the proposed park-wide improvements from the plan as built features. These proposed interventions focus on improving the regional and neighborhood connectivity, access and trails, park amenities, storm-water solutions, and natural resources.

The goal of the graphic novel is to communicate future design and planning possibilities for the canyon in a format that is accessible to the public and sparks community support for the next decade of park reinvestment.

CREDITS

In collaboration with Kent Parks Planning and Development Staff;
Story by Debra Guenther, Dakota Keene, Zoe Kasperzyk, & Charlie Able;
Illustrations by Charlie Able.

Kent's Canyon of Connections was made possible by:

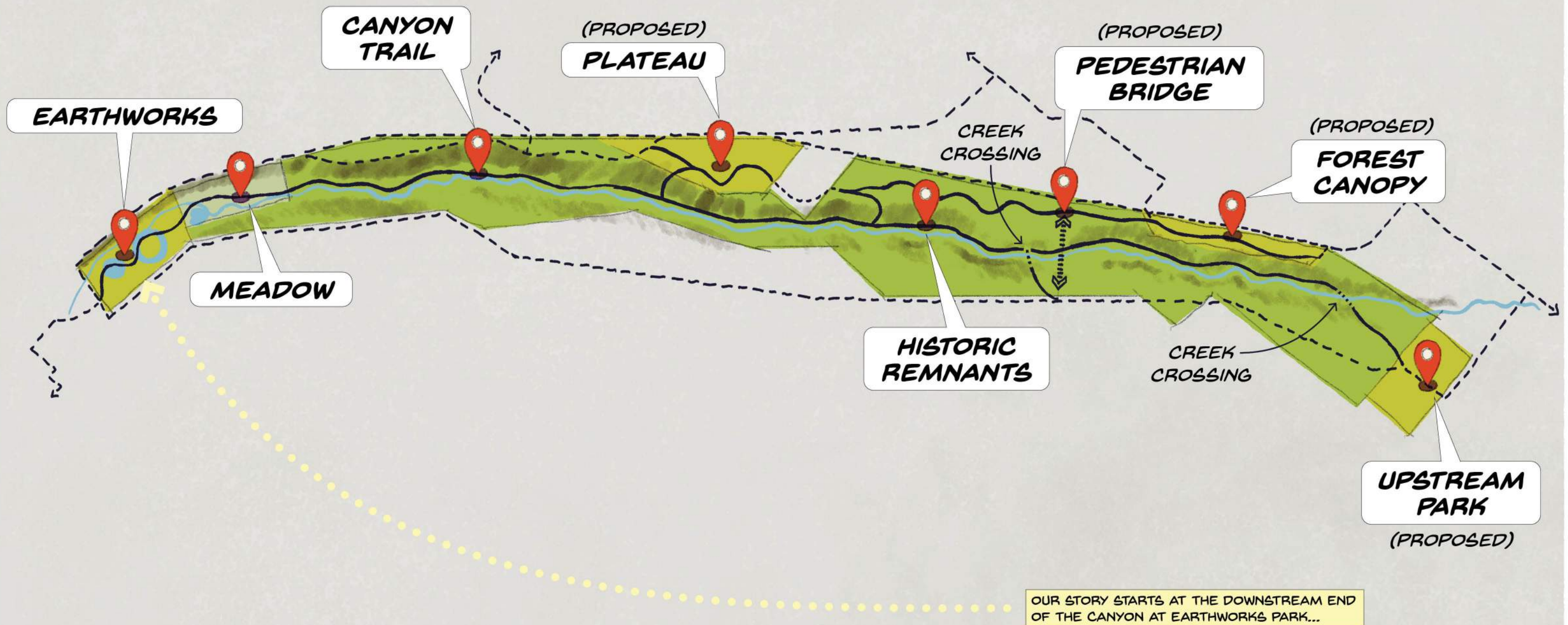


THIS IS A STORY ABOUT A BELOVED PLACE IN KENT, WASHINGTON...

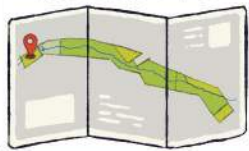
YOU MAY BE FAMILIAR WITH EARTHWORKS, THE ICONIC LAND ART STORMWATER PARK, BUT DID YOU KNOW THAT MILL CREEK CANYON IS ALSO A PART OF THIS SAME PARK AND TRAIL SYSTEM?

TOGETHER, THESE IMPORTANT PARKS HAVE THE POTENTIAL TO BE A CHERISHED DESTINATION FOR BOTH RESIDENTS AND VISITORS ALIKE, BUT THEY REQUIRE ESSENTIAL INVESTMENTS TO UNLOCK THEIR FULL POTENTIAL.

THIS STORY GOES BEYOND OUR PRESENT DAY AND ENVISIONS WHAT THESE PARKS ASPIRE TO BE.

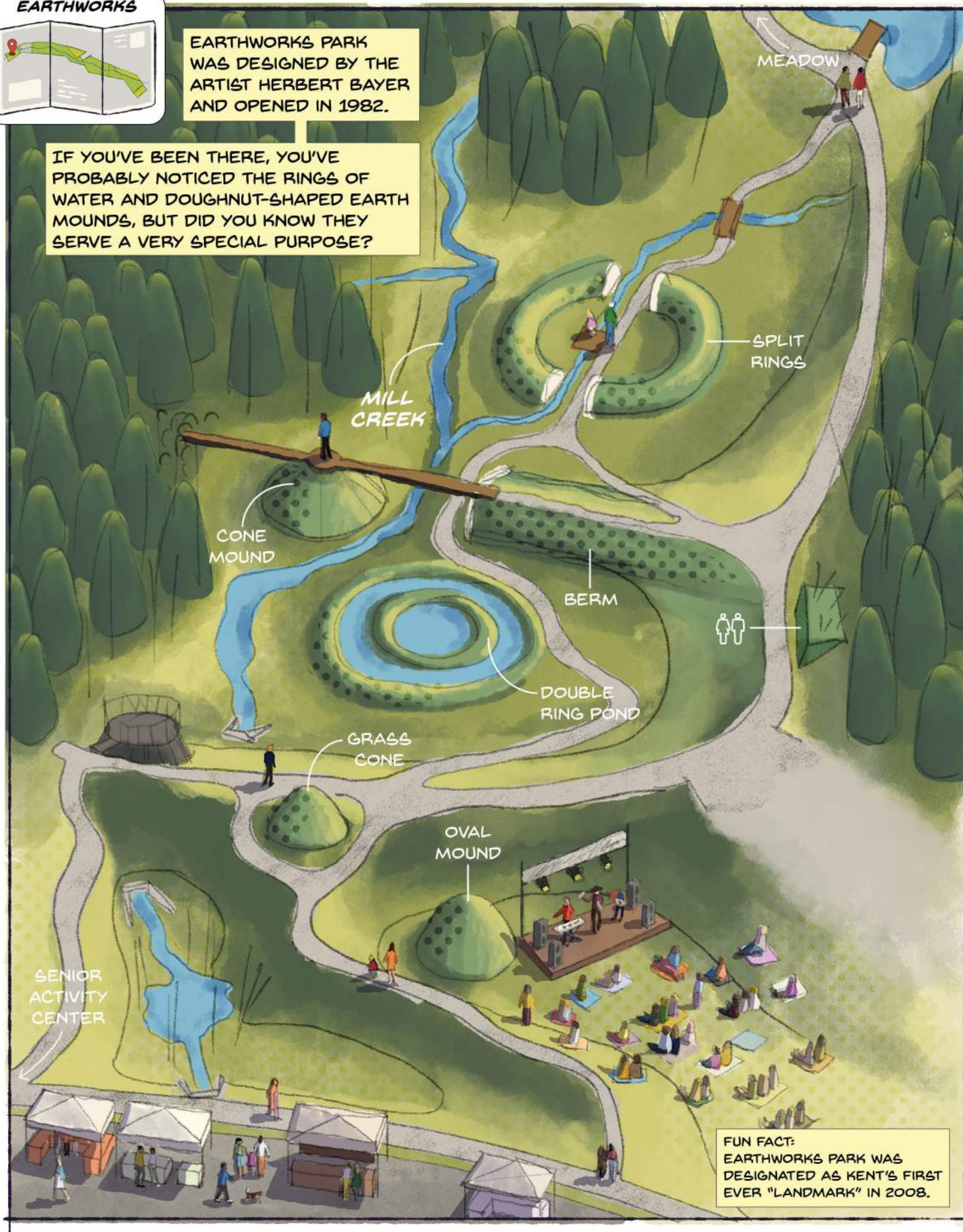


EARTHWORKS



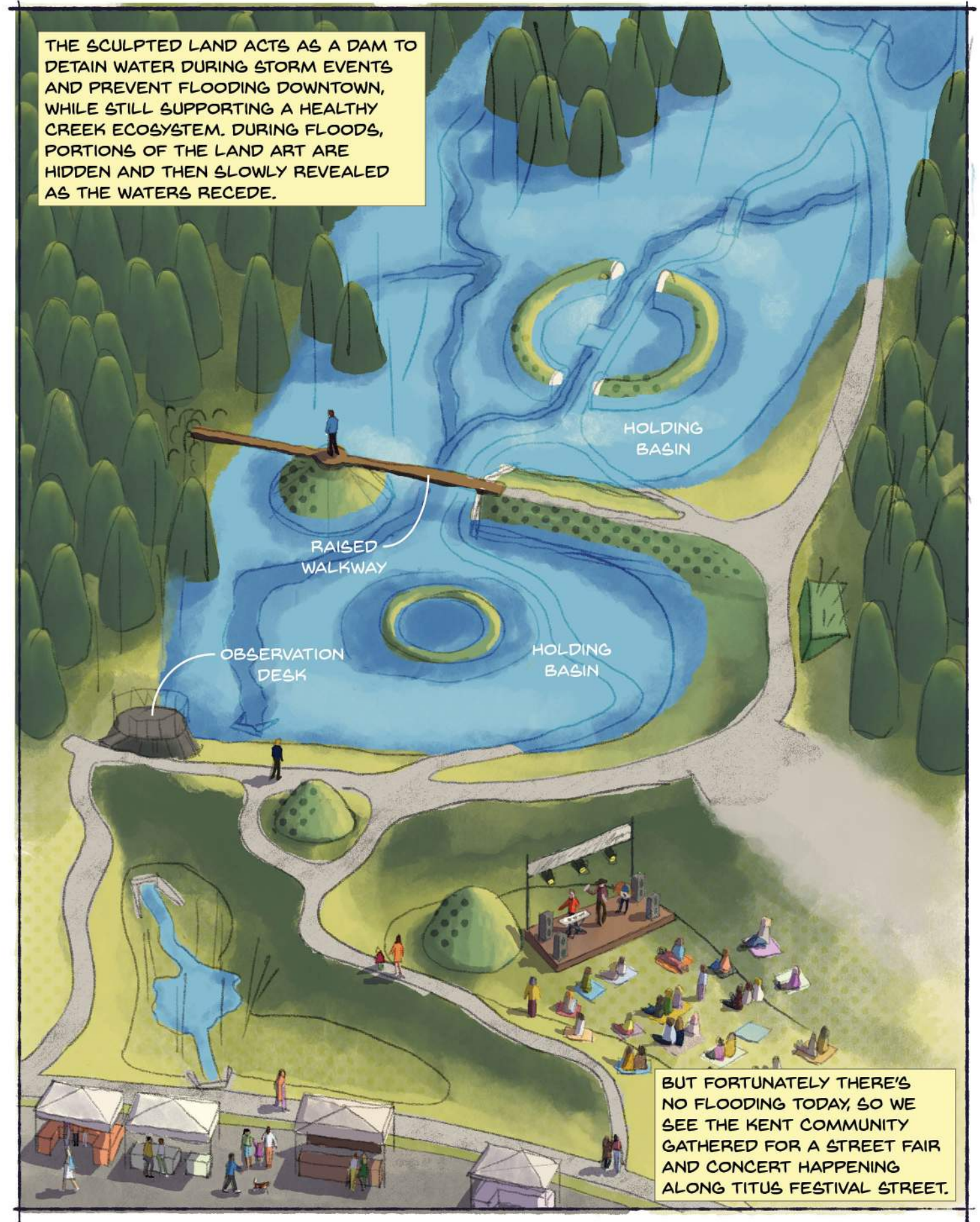
EARTHWORKS PARK WAS DESIGNED BY THE ARTIST HERBERT BAYER AND OPENED IN 1982.

IF YOU'VE BEEN THERE, YOU'VE PROBABLY NOTICED THE RINGS OF WATER AND DOUGHNUT-SHAPED EARTH MOUNDS, BUT DID YOU KNOW THEY SERVE A VERY SPECIAL PURPOSE?



FUN FACT: EARTHWORKS PARK WAS DESIGNATED AS KENT'S FIRST EVER "LANDMARK" IN 2008.

THE SCULPTED LAND ACTS AS A DAM TO DETAIN WATER DURING STORM EVENTS AND PREVENT FLOODING DOWNTOWN, WHILE STILL SUPPORTING A HEALTHY CREEK ECOSYSTEM. DURING FLOODS, PORTIONS OF THE LAND ART ARE HIDDEN AND THEN SLOWLY REVEALED AS THE WATERS RECEDE.



BUT FORTUNATELY THERE'S NO FLOODING TODAY, SO WE SEE THE KENT COMMUNITY GATHERED FOR A STREET FAIR AND CONCERT HAPPENING ALONG TITUS FESTIVAL STREET.

AS WE LOOK CLOSER AT EARTHWORKS PARK, WE SEE A GIRL, NAMED AISHA...



AFTER ENJOYING THE STREET FAIR ON TITUS FESTIVAL STREET, AISHA HEADS INTO EARTHWORKS PARK TO MEET UP WITH HER GOOD FRIEND, MIA.

HEY, AISHA!



HEY, MIA! GLAD YOU MADE IT!

YOU READY TO GO FOR A HIKE?

TOTALLY! I'VE BEEN LOOKING AT A COMPUTER ALL DAY SO I'M EXCITED TO BE OUTSIDE.



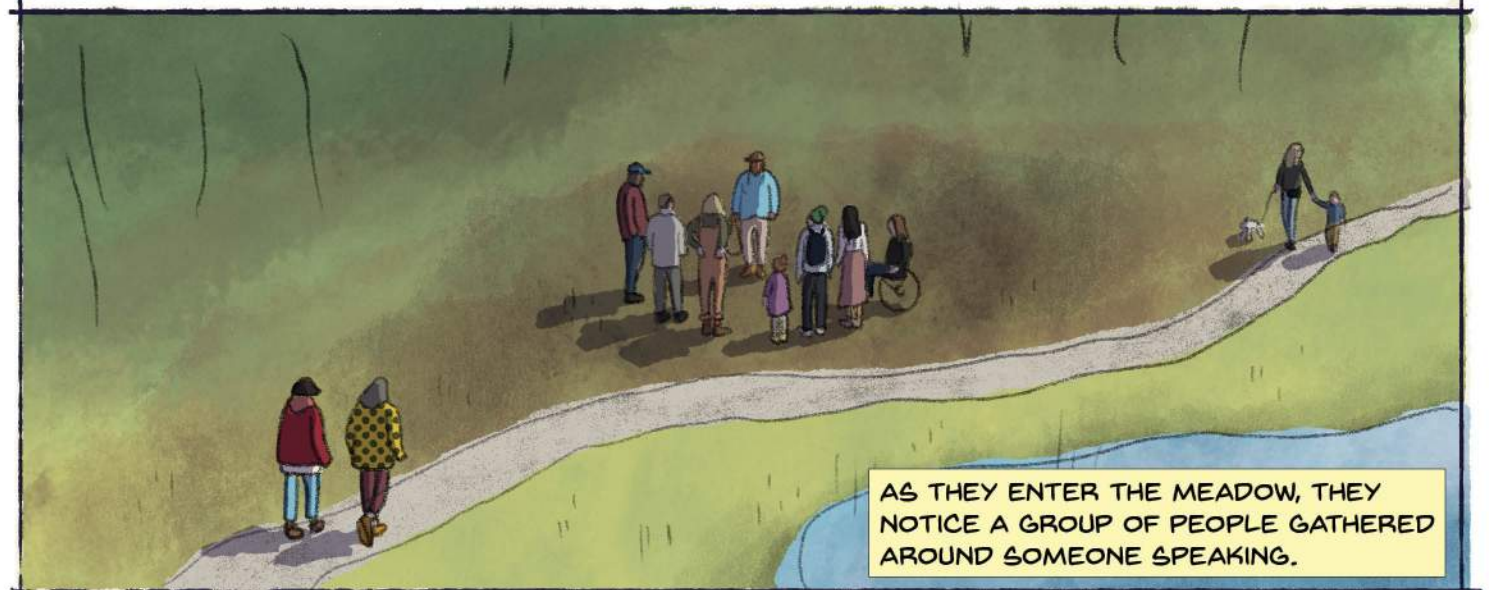
WELL, I'VE BEEN WANTING TO WALK THE FULL CANYON TRAIL.

WOULD YOU BE UP FOR THAT?

SURE! I HAVEN'T DONE THAT BEFORE SO LET'S GO FOR IT!

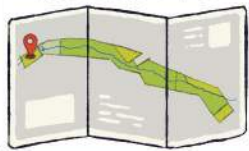


AISHA AND MIA BEGIN THEIR JOURNEY WALKING UPSTREAM THROUGH EARTHWORKS PARK.



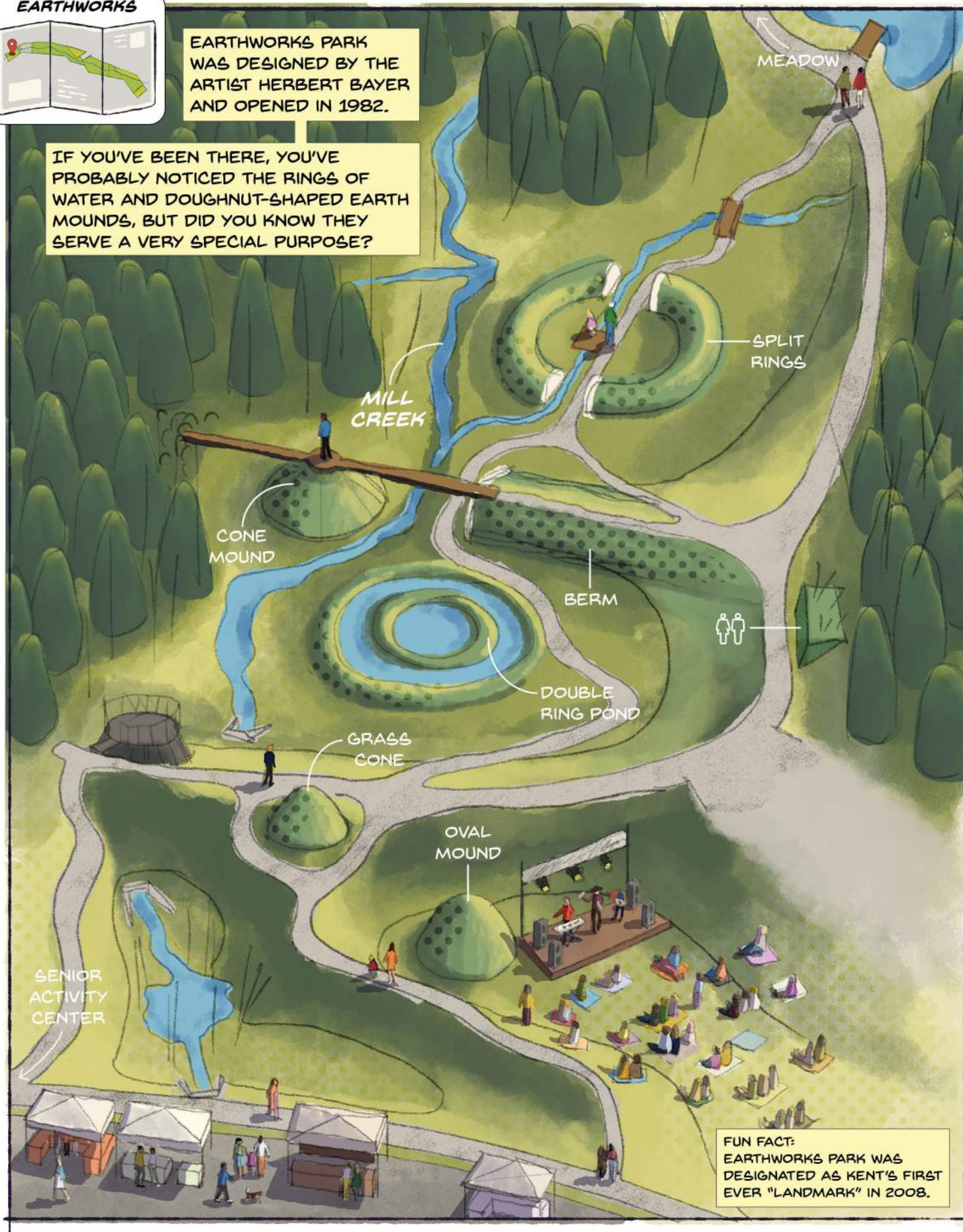
AS THEY ENTER THE MEADOW, THEY NOTICE A GROUP OF PEOPLE GATHERED AROUND SOMEONE SPEAKING.

EARTHWORKS

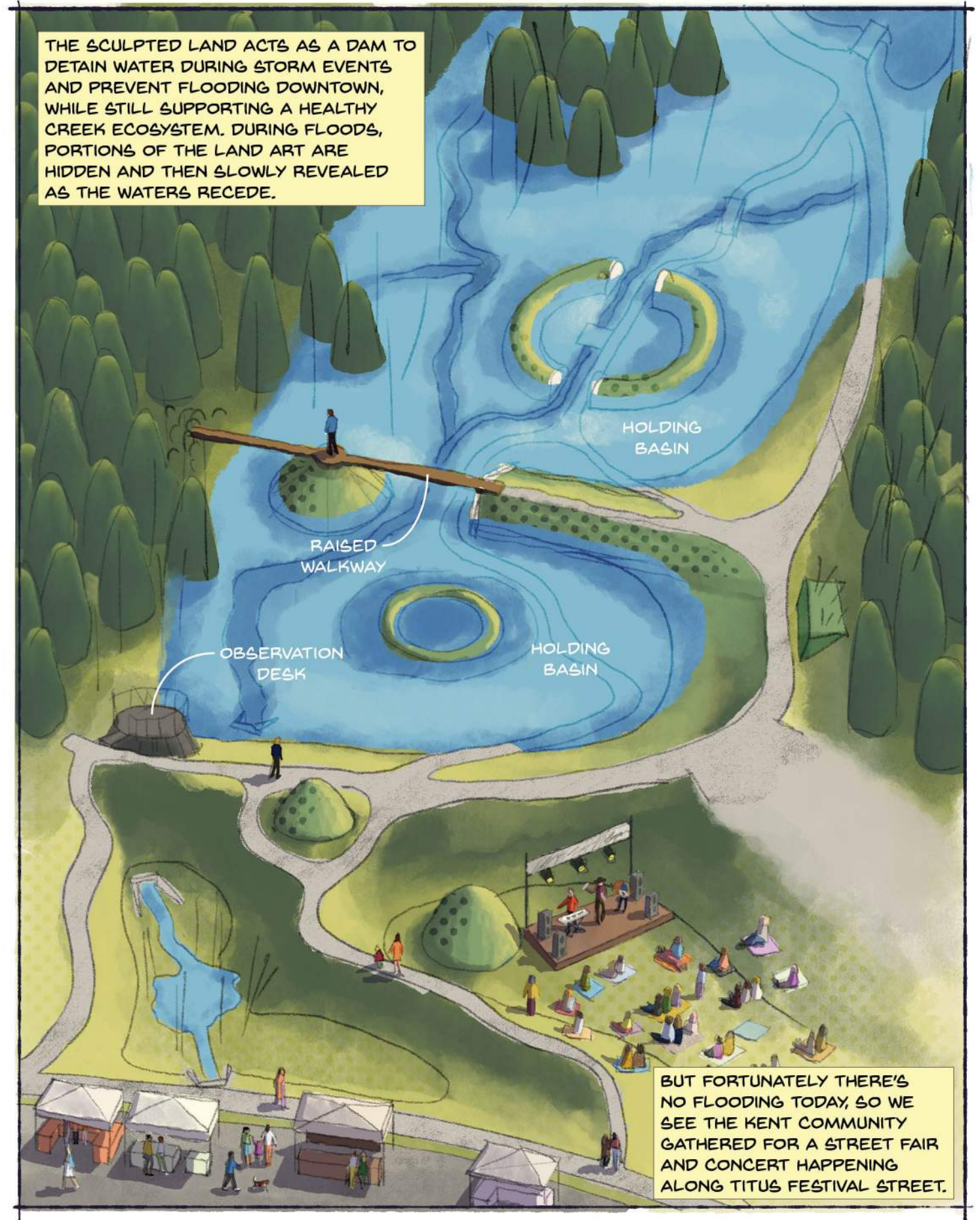


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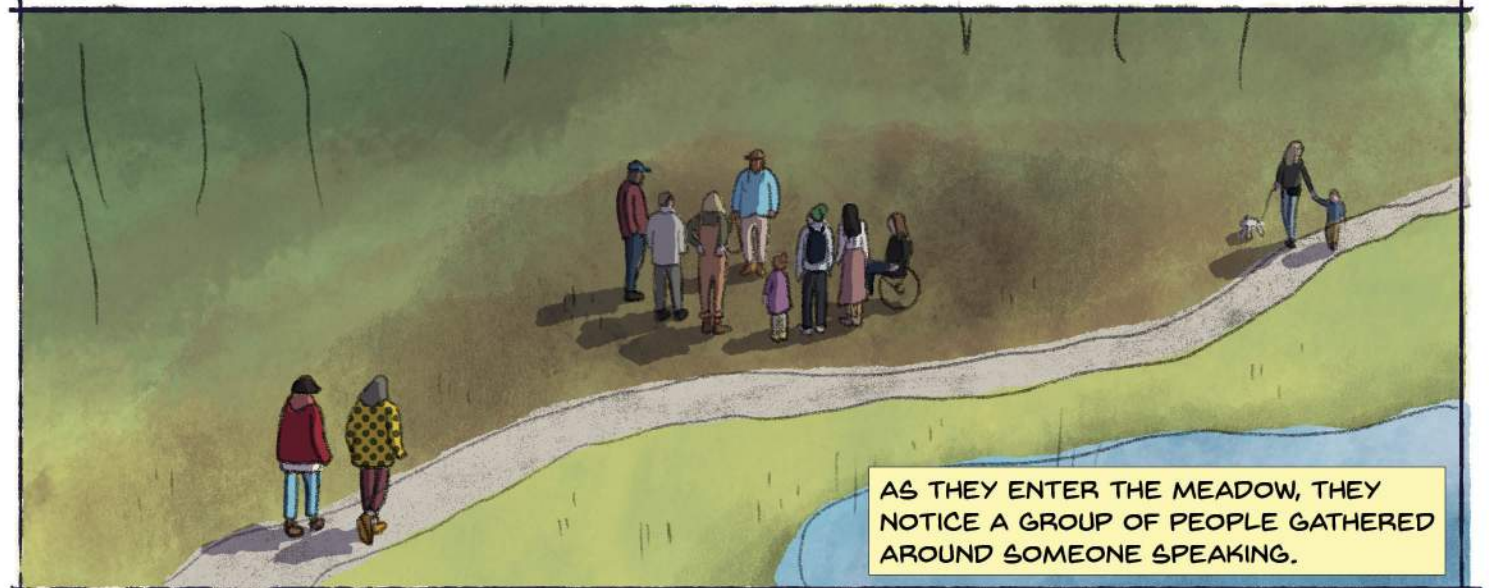
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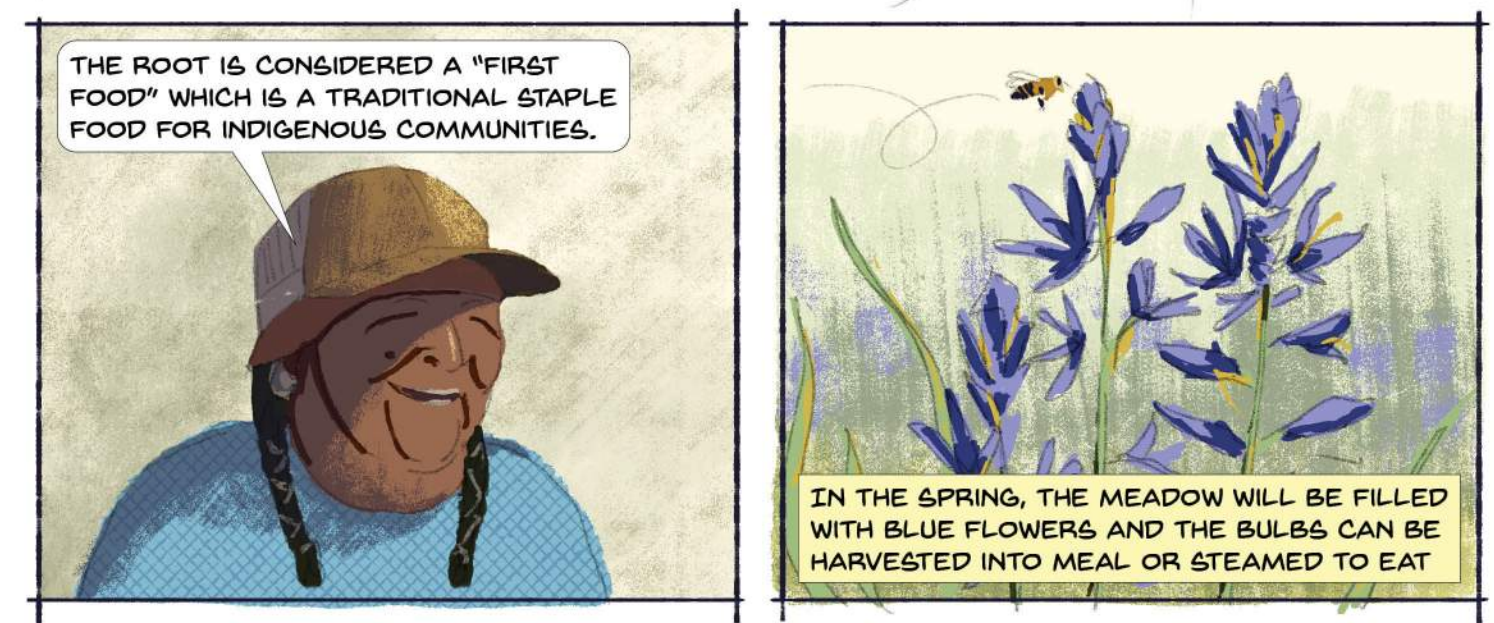
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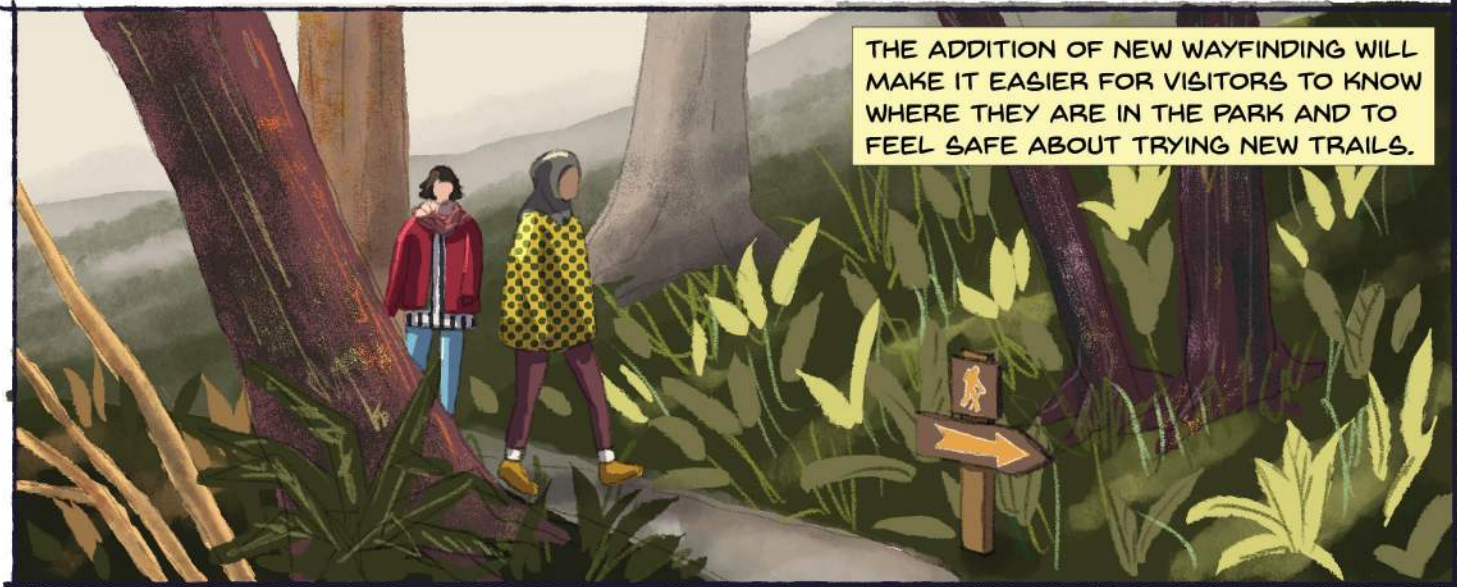
SO HAVE YOU EVER BEEN TO THIS PART OF THE PARK?



NO, I ALWAYS THOUGHT IT WAS JUST THE EARTHWORKS...

THIS IS REALLY PRETTY!

THE ADDITION OF NEW WAYFINDING WILL MAKE IT EASIER FOR VISITORS TO KNOW WHERE THEY ARE IN THE PARK AND TO FEEL SAFE ABOUT TRYING NEW TRAILS.



OK, DON'T JUDGE ME, BUT MY MOM GOT ME ONE OF THOSE PLANT IDENTIFICATION GUIDES.

HE-HE!

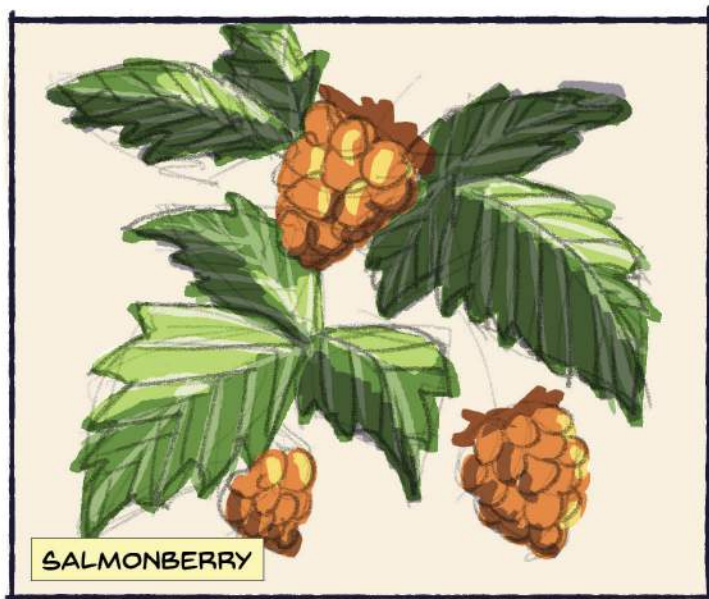
NO, I LOVE IT! HAVE YOU FOUND ANYTHING ON THE LIST?



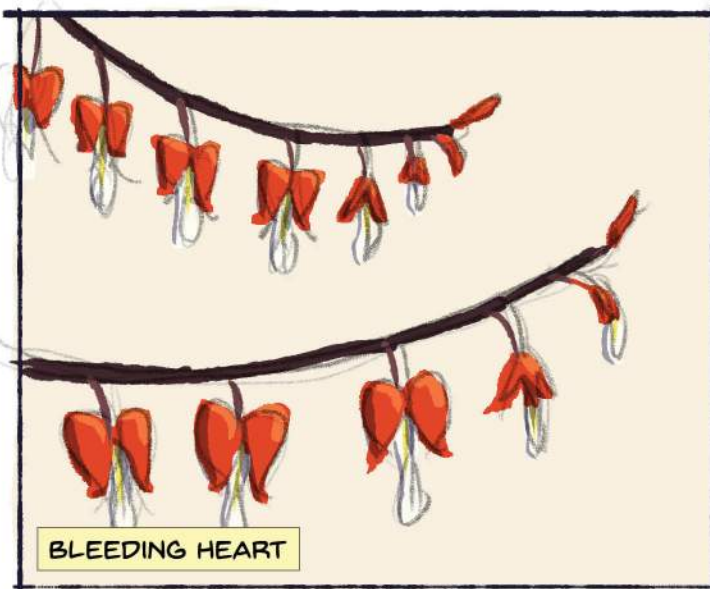
HMM, LET'S SEE...



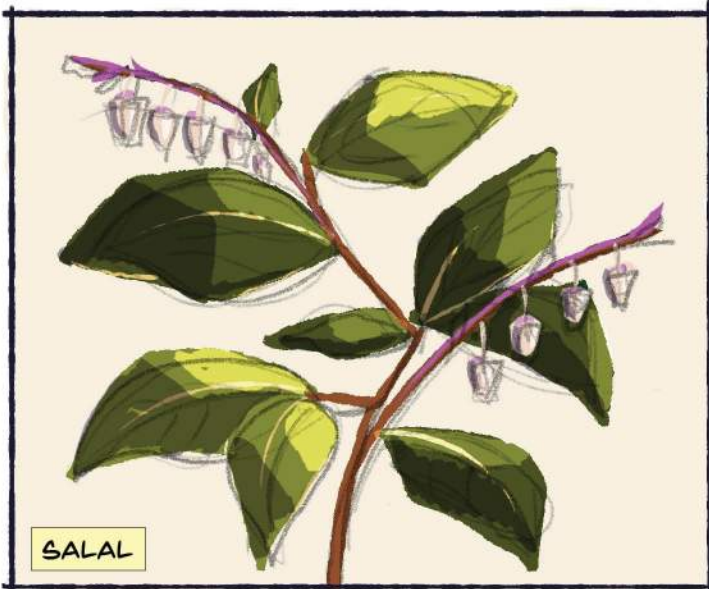
SWORD FERN



SALMONBERRY



BLEEDING HEART



SALAL

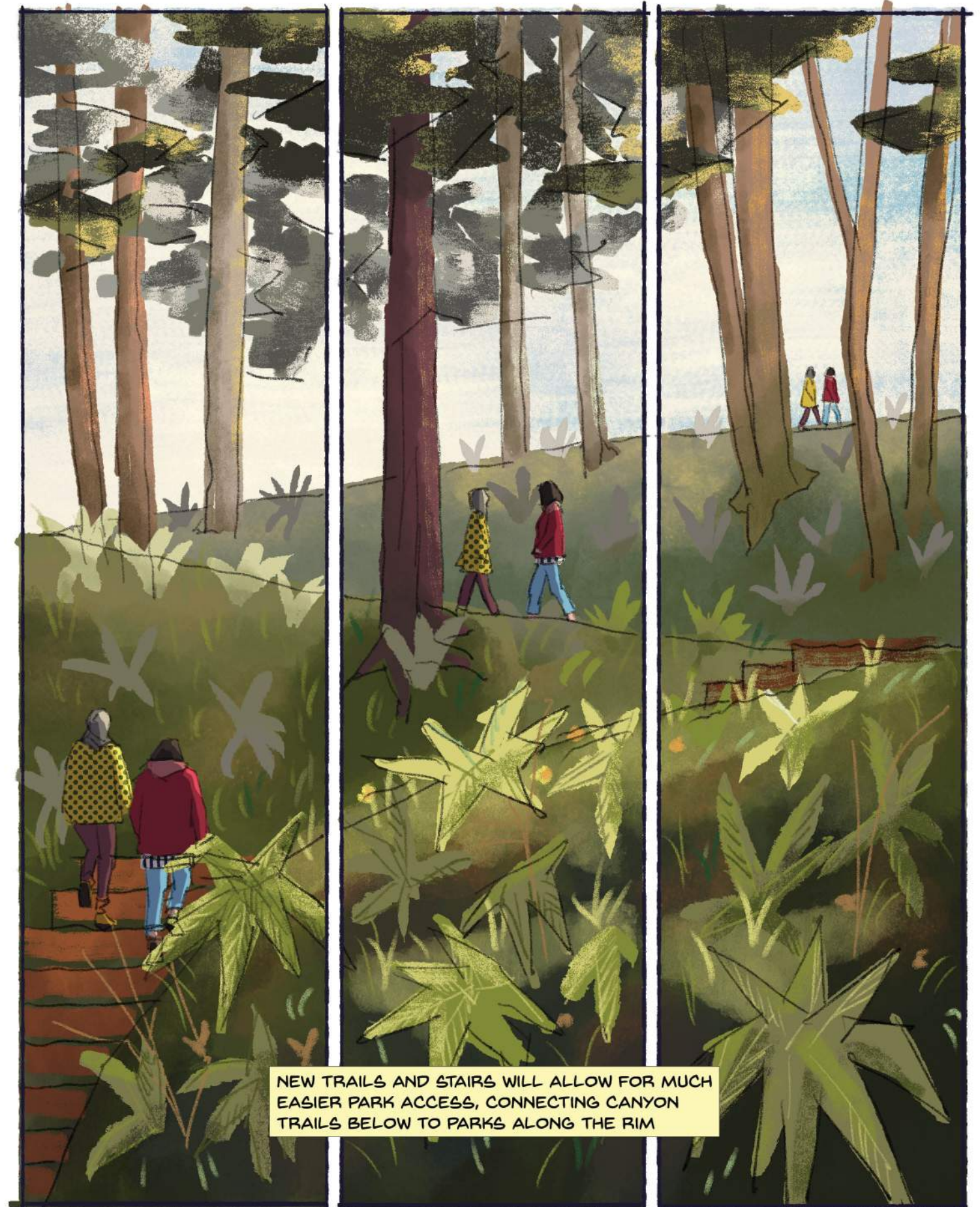


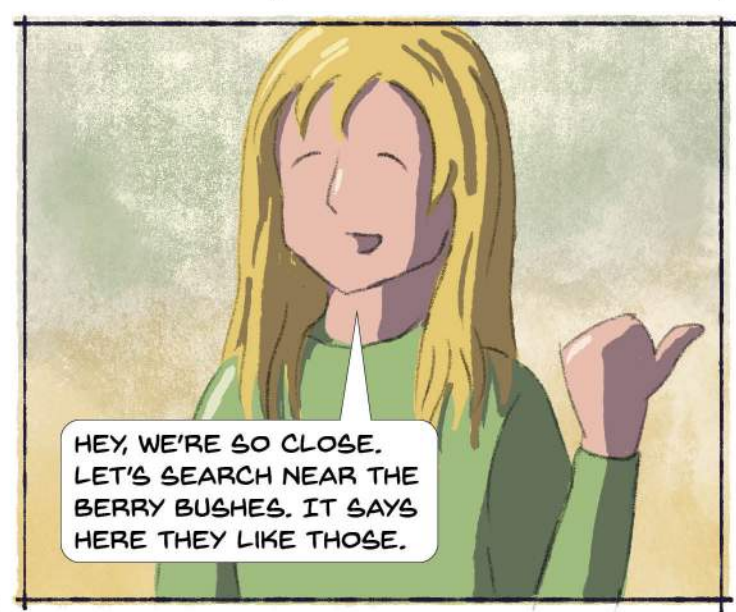
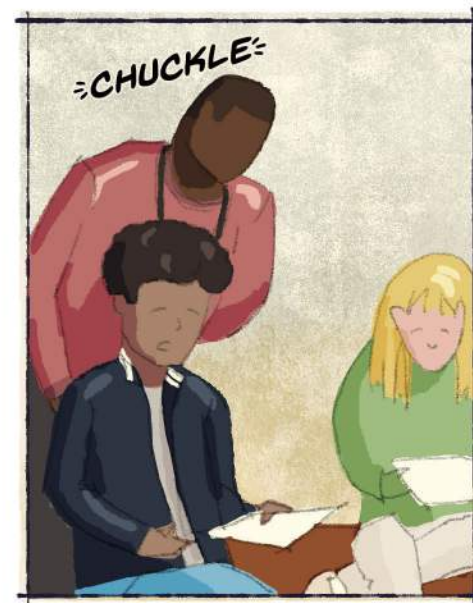
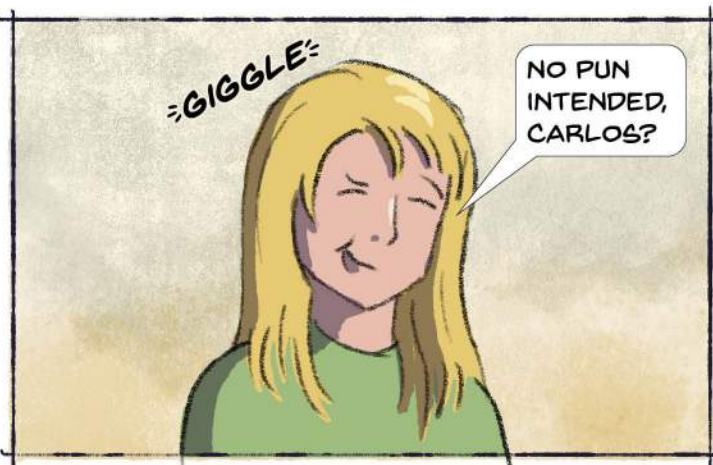
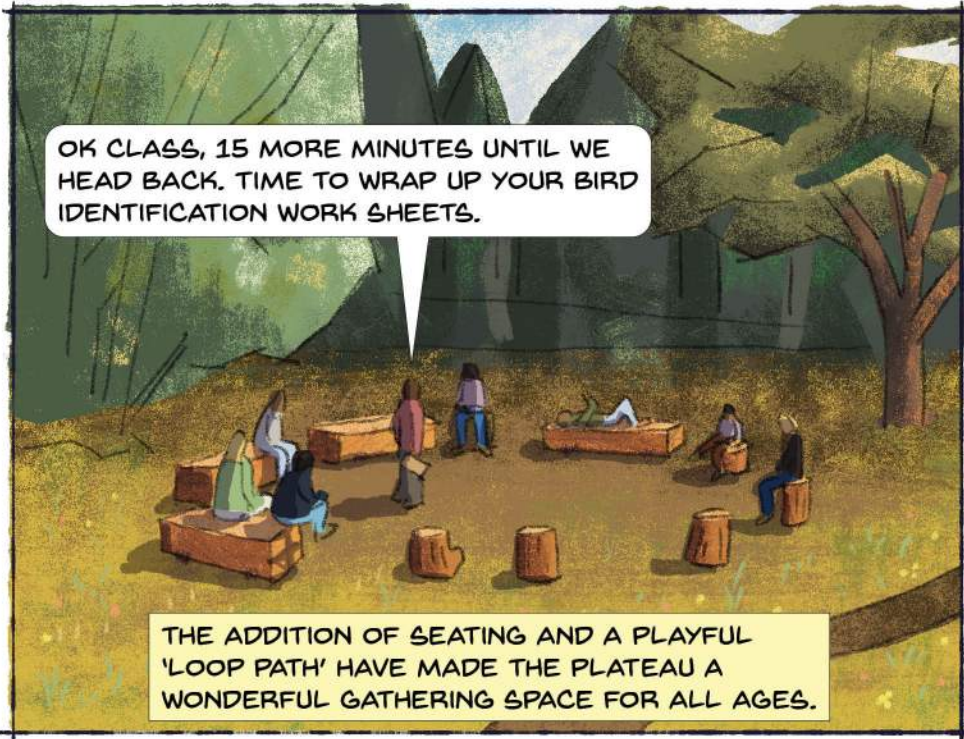
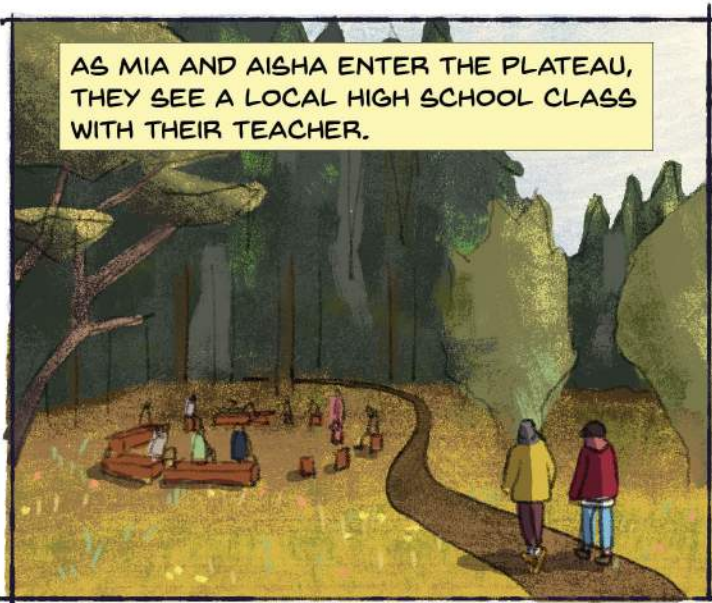
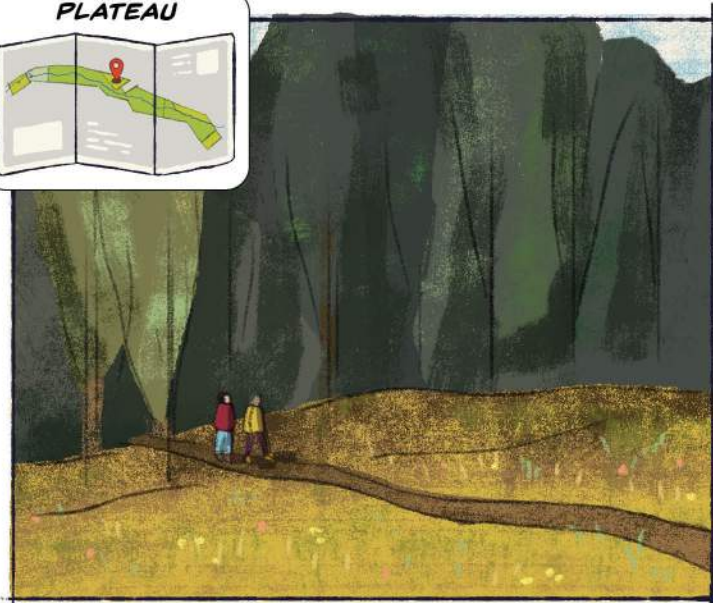
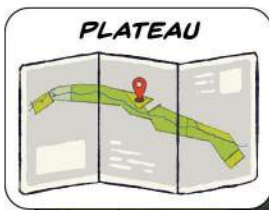
CHICKEN OF THE WOODS



DOUGLAS FIR









ABBY, LOOK!
IN THAT TREE...

I THINK I SEE THE
CEDAR WAXWING!



WOW, IT'S SO!
BEAUTIFUL!

HABITAT RESTORATION WITH MORE NATIVE PLANTS WILL
ENCOURAGE MORE WILDLIFE TO ENTER THE PARK.



ALRIGHT EVERYONE,
IT'S TIME TO WRAP
UP. MAKE SURE YOUR
WORK SHEETS ARE
COMPLETE.



LET'S GATHER NEAR
THE ENTRANCE AND
START WALKING BACK
TO KENT MERIDIAN.



AS MIA AND AISHA CONTINUE THEIR HIKE
THROUGH THE CANYON, THEY COME UPON
A COUPLE HAVING A CONVERSATION.

HISTORIC REMNANTS



IT'S HARD TO BELIEVE THIS AREA USED TO BE LOGGED.

MM-HMM.

THE TREES CERTAINLY HAVE GROWN BACK.

WELL SURE, BUT IT'S BEEN OVER 100 YEARS AND THESE NEW TREES STILL AREN'T AS BIG AS THEY ONCE WERE.

I MEAN, LOOK AT THE SIZE OF THIS STUMP!

IT EVEN HAS THE NOTCHES FROM WHEN THEY CUT IT DOWN.

OH YEAH, I LEARNED ABOUT THOSE ON A GUIDED HIKE WITH THE KENT HISTORIC SOCIETY.

IN THE 1800'S, LOGGERS WOULD CUT NOTCHES INTO THE TREE ABOVE THE BASE AND THEN WEDGE IN A WOOD PLANK, CALLED A "SPRINGBOARD", ON WHICH THEY STOOD TO CHOP AND SAW THE TREE DOWN.



IT'S STRANGE TO PICTURE SUCH A BIG LOGGING INDUSTRY HERE IN MILL CREEK CANYON...

AS MORE SETTLERS CAME TO THE AREA, MORE TIMBER WAS NEEDED FOR DEVELOPMENT. MILL CREEK CANYON PLAYED A CRITICAL PART IN THAT DEVELOPMENT.

...BUT THERE ARE CLUES THAT LET YOU KNOW IT WAS HERE.

THE OLD DAM, NOW JUST MOSS-COVERED REMNANTS, USED TO CONTROL THE FLOW OF MILL CREEK TO TRANSPORT LOGS DOWN TO THE SAWMILL AT THE END OF THE CANYON.



YOU KNOW, IN SOME WAYS, ALL THOSE OLD TREES ARE STILL AROUND US...

...TRANSFORMED INTO THE HISTORIC BUILDINGS OF KENT...



...OR AT LEAST THAT'S ONE WAY TO THINK ABOUT IT.

OH, HENRY, YOU'RE SUCH A HOPELESS ROMANTIC.



DID YOU HEAR WHAT THAT COUPLE SAID ABOUT ALL THE LOGGING?

OH, YEAH. I DIDN'T KNOW ANY OF THAT. BUT I'M REALLY GLAD KENT PRESERVED THIS AREA AS A PARK.



ME TOO. I WANT THESE TREES TO LIVE FOR ANOTHER HUNDRED YEARS.



WOAH

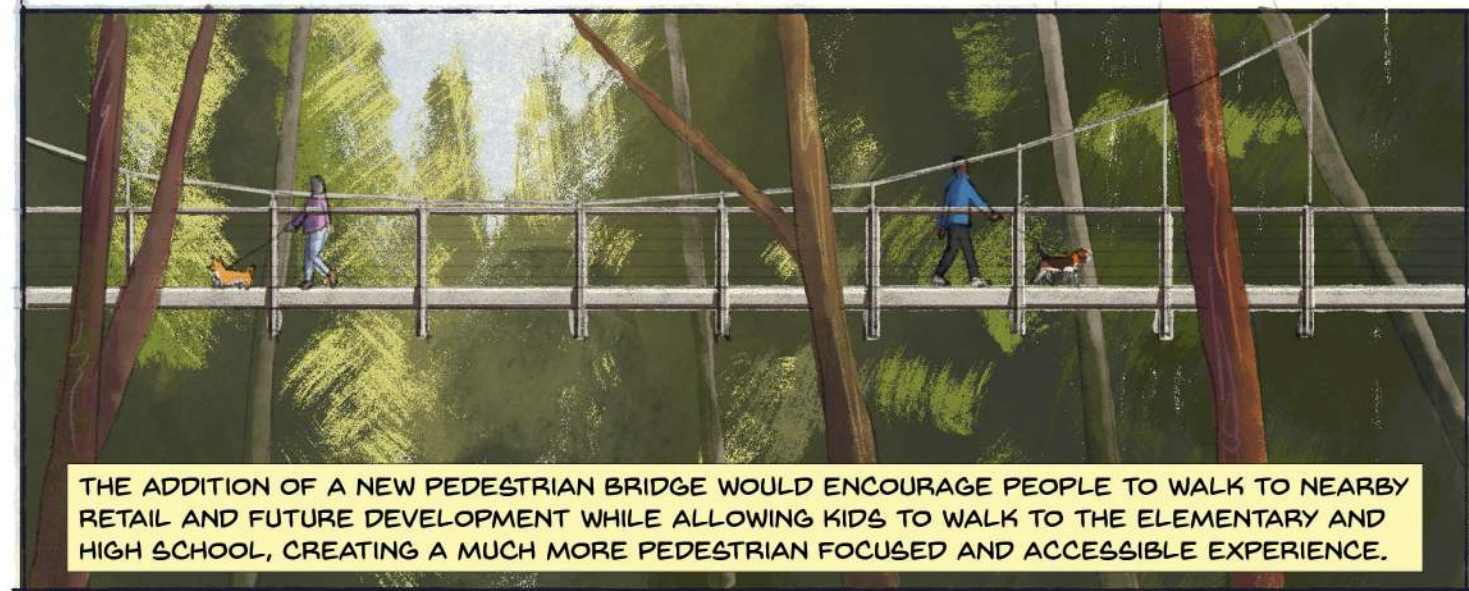
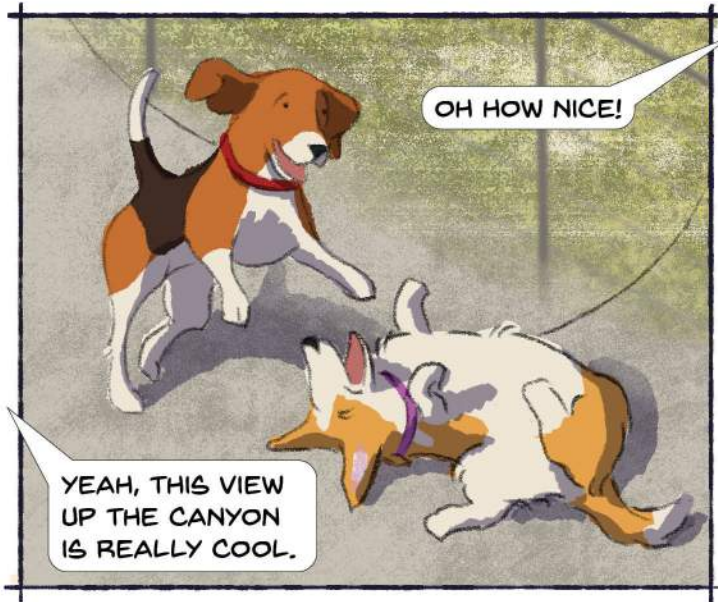
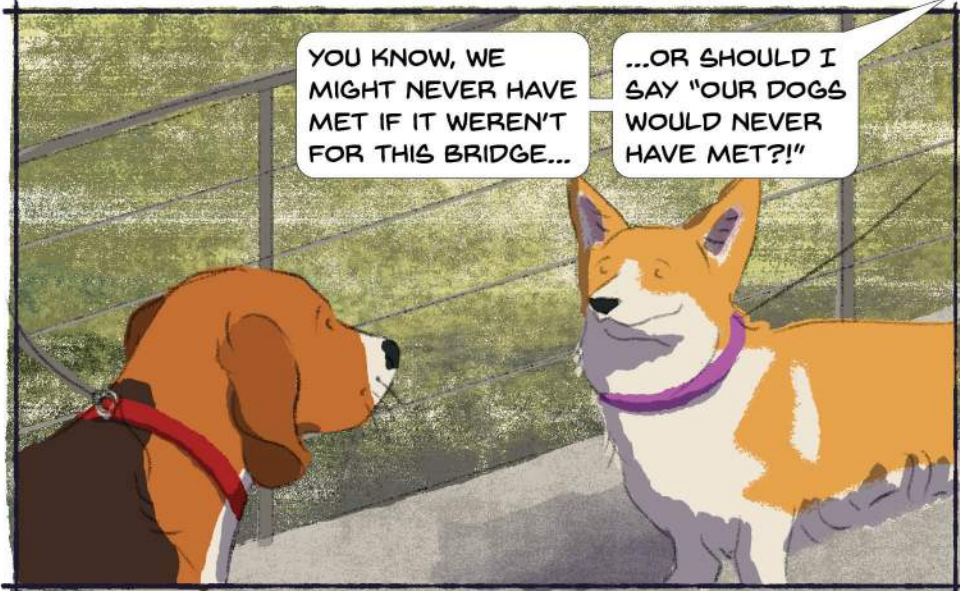
COOL



HI NANCY, MAX COULD SMELL DAISY FROM ACROSS THE CANYON!



AND I KNOW DAISY IS HAPPY TO SEE HER FRIEND MAX!

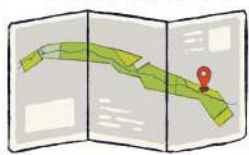


THE ADDITION OF A NEW PEDESTRIAN BRIDGE WOULD ENCOURAGE PEOPLE TO WALK TO NEARBY RETAIL AND FUTURE DEVELOPMENT WHILE ALLOWING KIDS TO WALK TO THE ELEMENTARY AND HIGH SCHOOL, CREATING A MUCH MORE PEDESTRIAN FOCUSED AND ACCESSIBLE EXPERIENCE.



THE INSTALLATION OF TRAILS AND A PLANTED BUFFER ALONG THE CANYON RIM WOULD MAKE THE WALK BETWEEN TRAILHEADS SAFER AND MORE ENJOYABLE.

FOREST CANOPY



AS FILMON AND MAX ENTER THE PARK, THEY ARE GREETED BY A PARK STEWARD.

HI, EVERYONE!



WELCOME TO FOREST CANOPY. WE'VE GOT A TON OF FAMILY-FRIENDLY POP-UPS GOING ON TODAY...



WE HAVE FOOD TRUCKS...



...AND PLAY AREAS...



...A BIKE COURSE FOR KIDS...



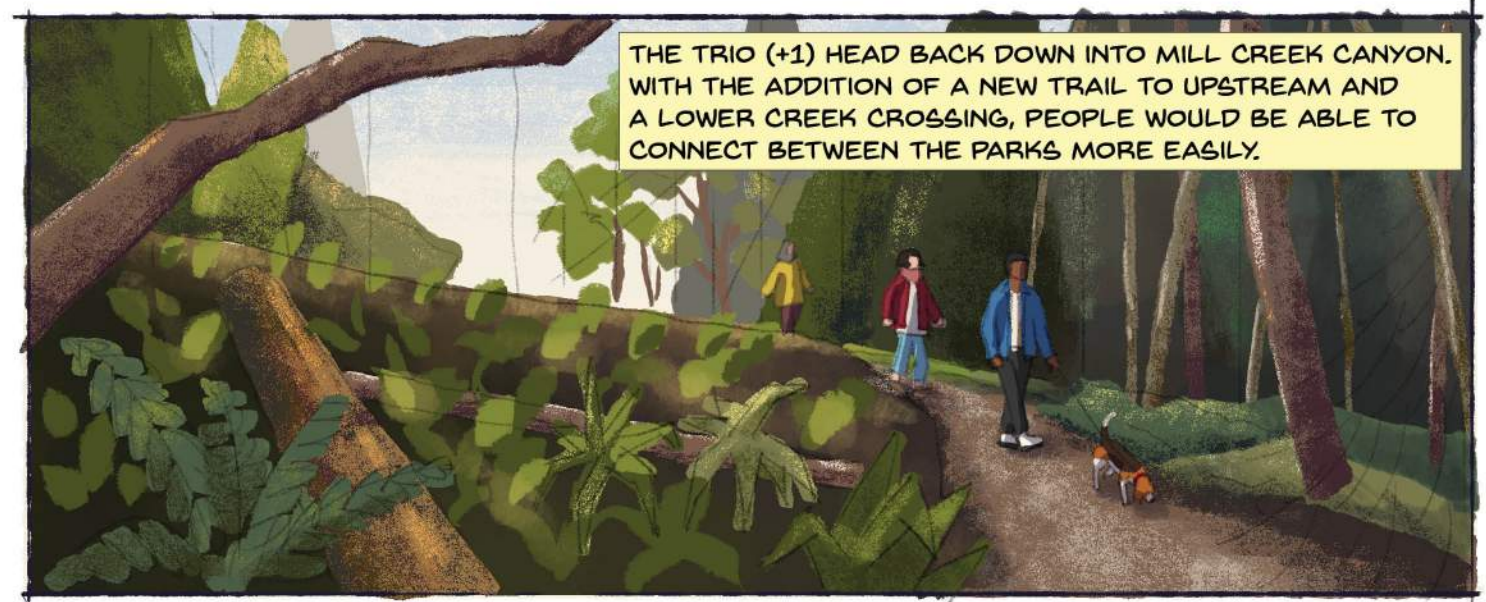
...AND ART INSTALLATIONS...



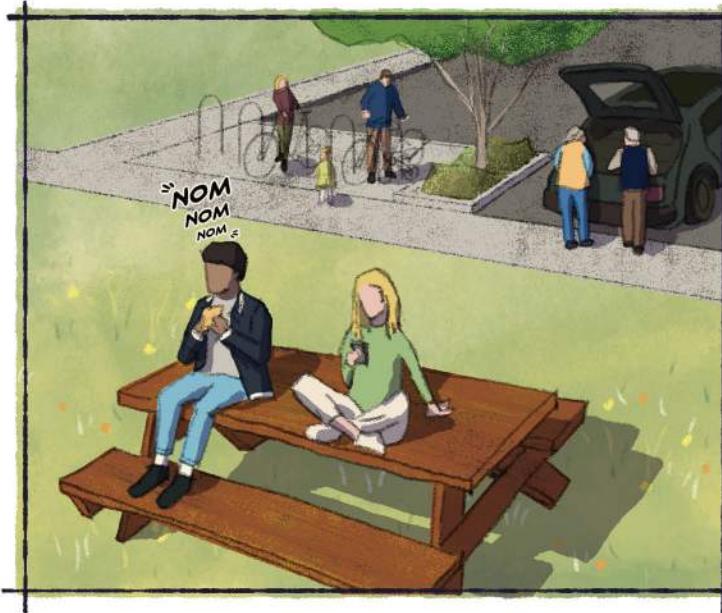
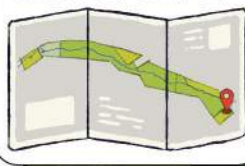
EVERYONE IS WELCOME, SO WE HOPE YOU HAVE A GREAT TIME!



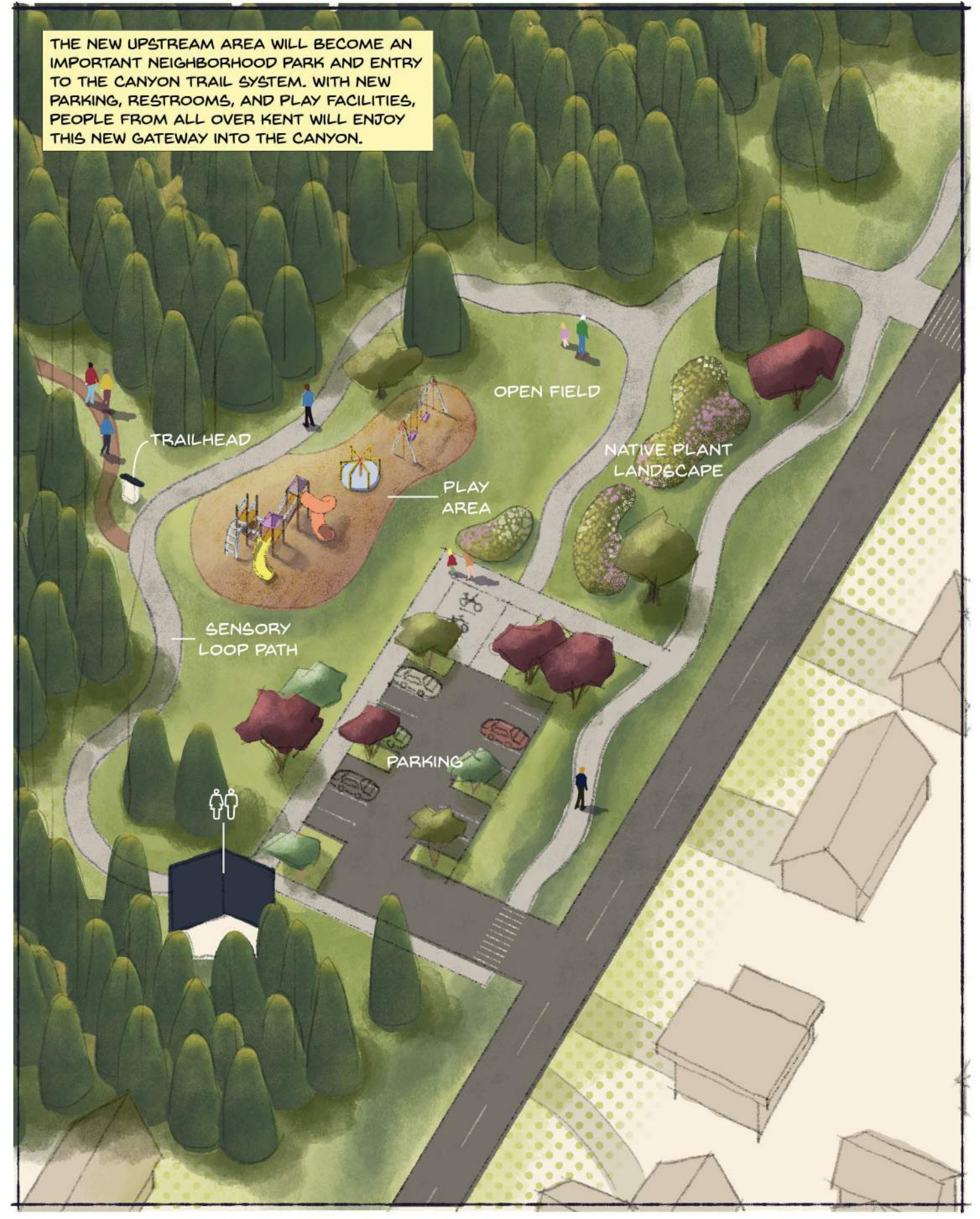
TRANSFORMING 100TH PL. INTO A PARK SPACE COULD BECOME AN AMAZING AMENITY, FOR THE CITIZENS OF THE CITY OF KENT.



UPSTREAM PARK



THE NEW UPSTREAM AREA WILL BECOME AN IMPORTANT NEIGHBORHOOD PARK AND ENTRY TO THE CANYON TRAIL SYSTEM. WITH NEW PARKING, RESTROOMS, AND PLAY FACILITIES, PEOPLE FROM ALL OVER KENT WILL ENJOY THIS NEW GATEWAY INTO THE CANYON.





ALRIGHT, IT'S GETTING LATE. I SHOULD PROBABLY HEAD HOME.



YEAH, ME TOO. THANKS SO MUCH FOR DOING THAT HIKE WITH ME.



ARE YOU KIDDING?! THAT WAS SO MUCH FUN!

LET ME KNOW WHENEVER YOU WANT TO HIKE THE CANYON AGAIN.

OK, I WILL!

=HUGS=



HAVE A GOOD NIGHT, AISHA!

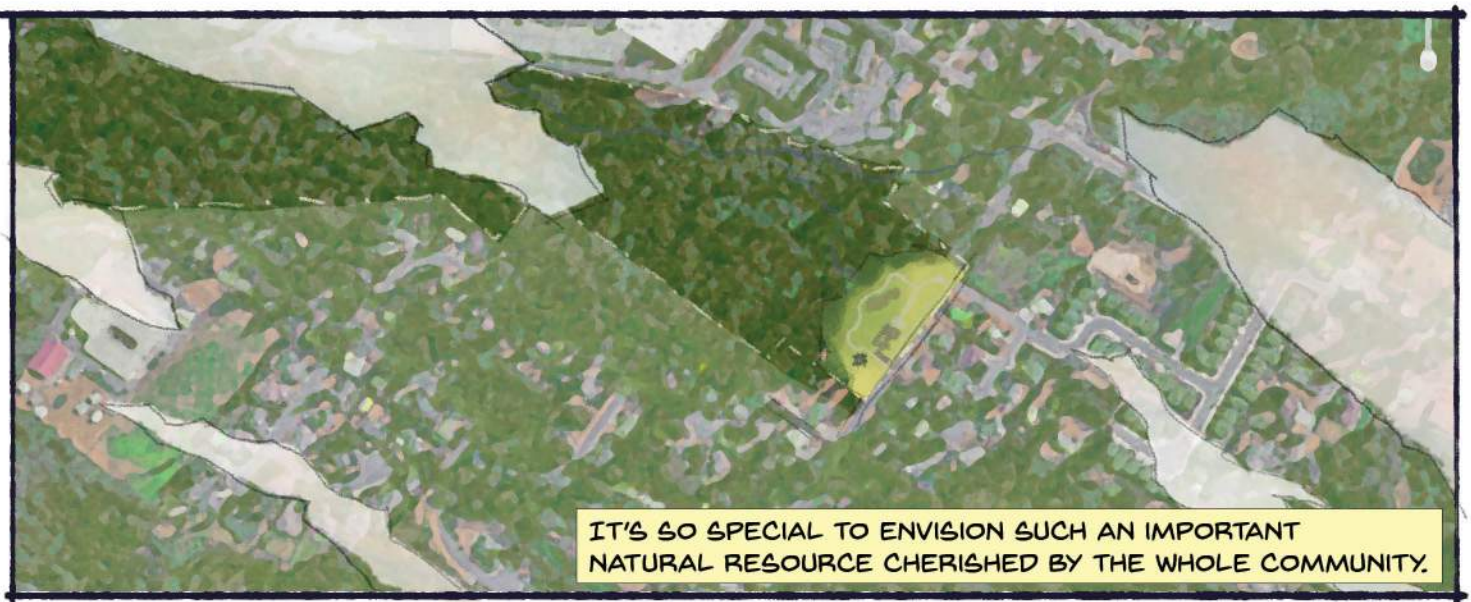
YOU TOO, MIA!



WITH NEW PARK INVESTMENTS MADE IN THE COMING YEARS, THE CANYON WILL BE USED MORE THAN EVER.



THE RANGE OF EXPERIENCES FROM THE CANYON RIM, DOWN TO THE CREEK IMMersed IN THE CANYON, AND OVER TO EARTHWORKS PARK WILL HAVE SOMETHING FOR EVERYONE.



IT'S SO SPECIAL TO ENVISION SUCH AN IMPORTANT NATURAL RESOURCE CHERISHED BY THE WHOLE COMMUNITY.

THE BUILT FEATURES AND ACTIVATION EVENTS YOU SAW IN THE STORY ARE A REFLECTION OF FEEDBACK FROM THE PUBLIC DURING A COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PROCESS THAT TOOK PLACE BETWEEN 2022 AND 2023.

IF YOU ARE EXCITED ABOUT THESE PROPOSED PARK-WIDE IMPROVEMENTS WE ENCOURAGE YOU TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THIS PLAN AND SHARE YOUR SUPPORT OF THIS PROJECT.



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS FROM THE AUTHORS

First thanks go to the Kent Parks, Recreation & Community Services Department for their vision and collaboration on this project.

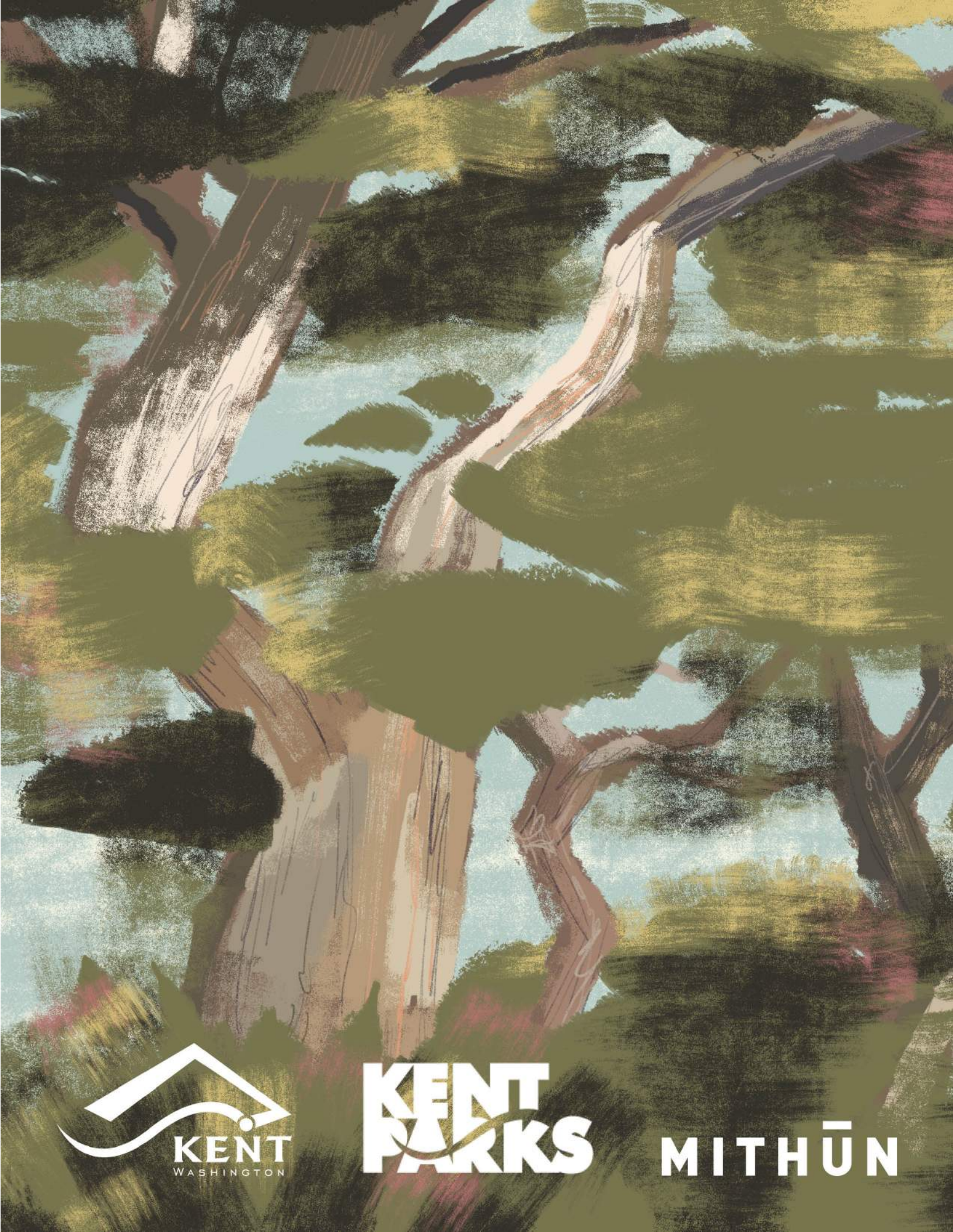
Special thanks to Mithun for believing in the power of this project and supporting its development.

To the residents of Kent, we hope you enjoyed reading this story as much as we enjoyed creating it. This project is by, for, and about you.

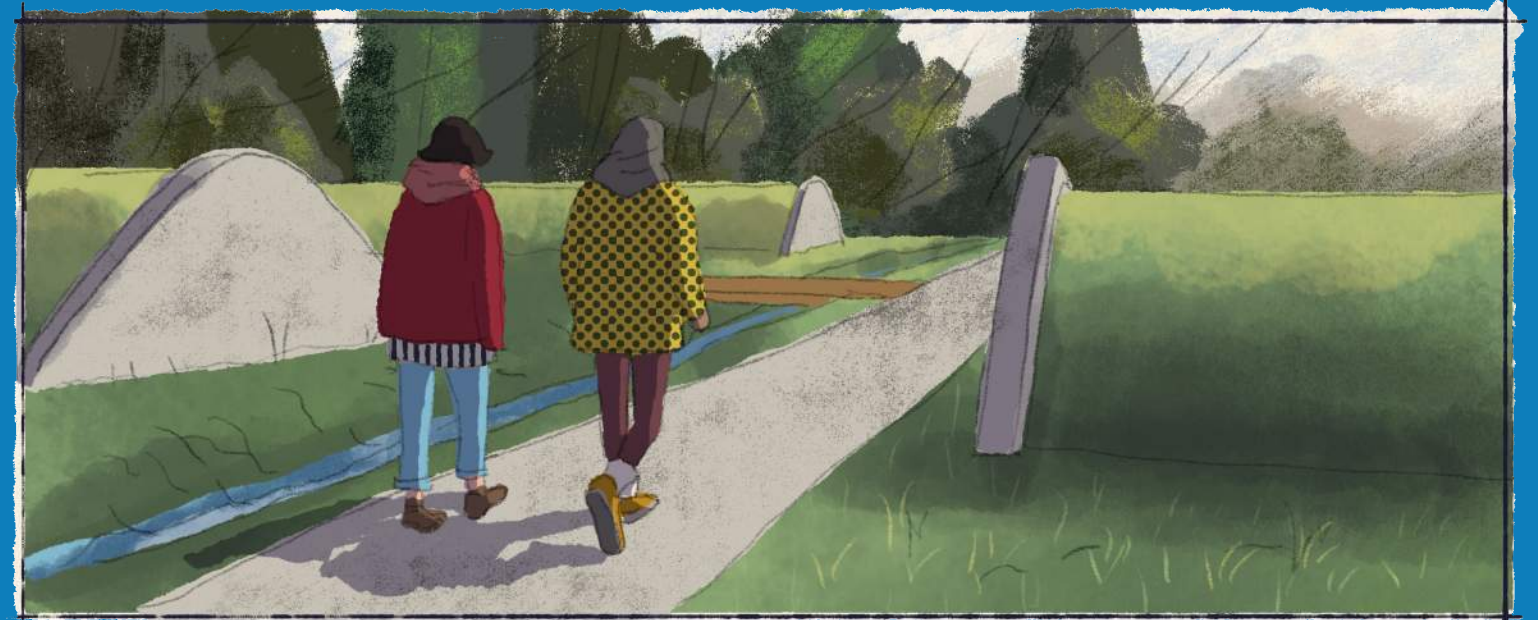
MORE INFO

Creating excitement and momentum by sharing the Mill Creek Canyon Earthworks Park Framework Plan and this graphic novel is an important early step in the long-term reinvestment process.

If you would like to learn more about the project, please scan the QR code below.



Executive Summary—



Project Vision




Mill Creek Canyon Earthworks Park Framework Plan is a first step in a long-term reinvestment plan to support the centerpiece of the Kent Park system. This natural resource park is 104.7 acres which includes an important regional riparian corridor for biodiversity, and a landmarked Modernist environmental art installation by Bauhaus-artist Herbert Bayer. The park also includes opportunities to expand nature-based experiences and infrastructure with a coherent trailhead

system, trails and walkable connections—all for the enjoyment of residents, workers, school children and visitors who live, learn, work and play in the surrounding neighborhoods Mill Creek, Scenic Hill, East Hill and Downtown Kent.

The acquisition of properties contiguous within the park and canyon by Kent Parks, as well as future redevelopment potential around the canyon, prompted this framework plan.

It builds on past plans, re-envision the potential of Mill Creek Canyon Earthworks Park, and adapts to current demographic, climate change and equity issues within the community of residents, property owners and cross-city agencies in Kent. The plan envisions Mill Creek Canyon Earthworks Park as a destination for all of Kent and the Puget Sound Region.

A photograph of a lush forest with tall, slender trees and a dense canopy of green leaves. Sunlight filters through the trees, creating a dappled light effect on the forest floor. A semi-transparent blue banner is overlaid on the upper portion of the image, containing white text.

Mill Creek Canyon Earthworks Park is treasured by multiple generations of diverse Kent community members who enjoy the dynamic, seasonal forest, meadow and creek experiences, art and cultural events and are actively engaged in stewarding the natural and cultural resources.

Goals



History + Culture

Building on the city jewel of Herbert Bayer’s environmental artwork that also functions as stormwater management infrastructure, this framework plan aims to bring attention, recognition and increased access to this resource within the City of Kent park system. In addition to the land art narrative, stories of water, flora, fauna, and people will be amplified through educational experiences, participation, and discovery throughout the park.



Health + Connections

Currently an underutilized resource, the Mill Creek Canyon Earthworks Park Framework Plan seeks to connect this unique place to the community. This will be achieved regionally and locally through enhanced and welcoming street connectivity, transit connections, wayfinding, events and a continuous walkway along the edges of the canyon and park.



Trail Improvements

Expressed as the highest priority by the participants of the public engagement, trail improvements will stitch the entire park together internally, as well as provide essential connectivity to the surrounding neighborhoods, downtown Kent, and future development that will occur as the City of Kent grows. Varied levels of trail experiences aim to allow visitors to access and experience the significant cultural and natural resources of Mill Creek Canyon Earthworks Park.



Equity

Building on the Parks and Open Space plan that identifies issues of equity within the greater park system, barriers to equitable access to the park and canyon aim to be addressed through transit, pedestrian, and bicycle connections between the surrounding neighborhoods. With a particular focus on eliminating the barrier that is created by Canyon Drive, this plan seeks to bridge this impediment to support planned transportation improvements and develop inclusive wayfinding that reaches outside and inside of the park. Trails serving all abilities will be increased to provide equitable access to all abilities.



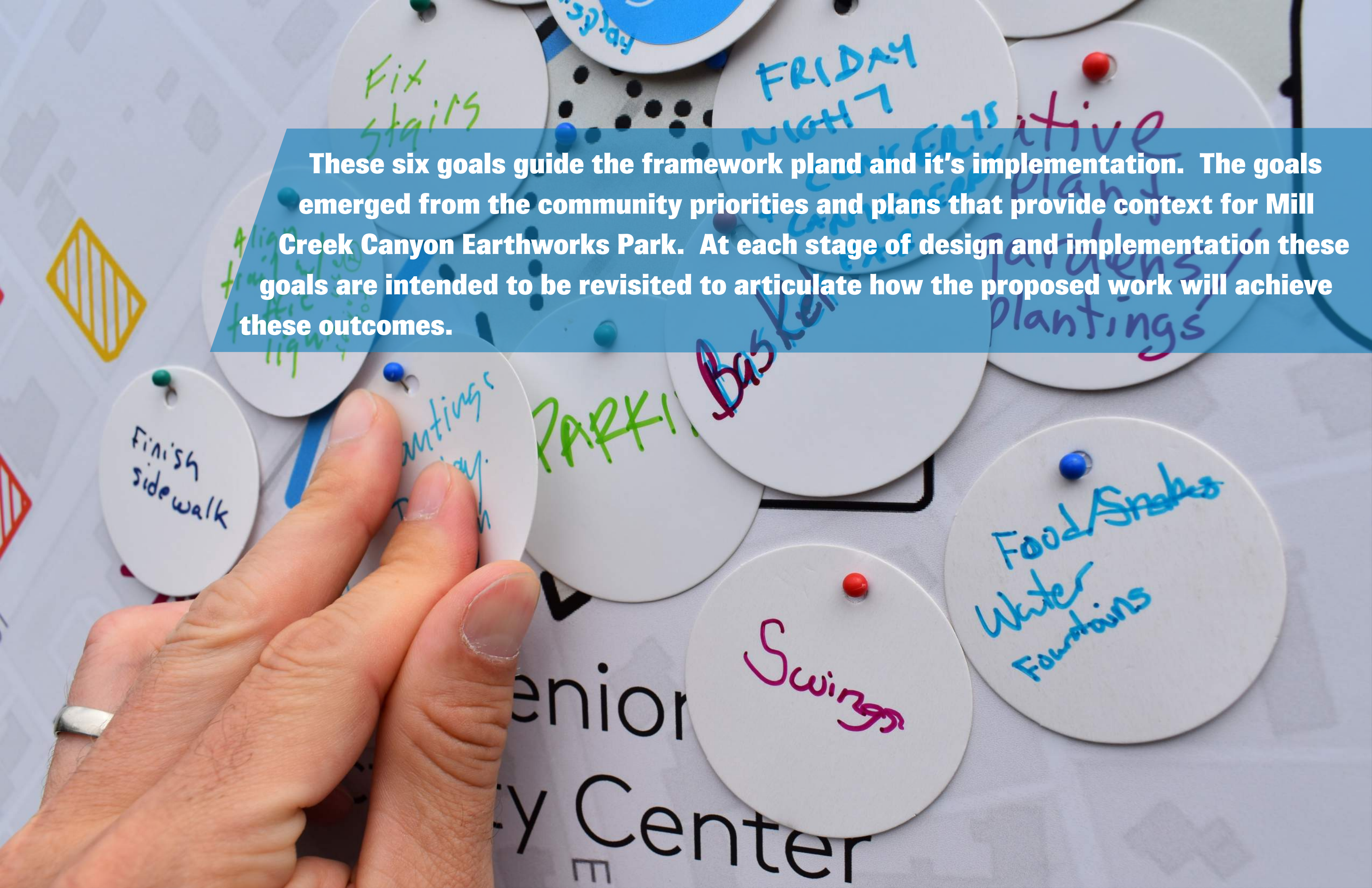
Natural Resources

This park is ultimately geared towards nature experiences prioritized over purely recreational ones, and improvements here aim to focus on connecting people with the natural world in diverse ways. This will be achieved by celebrating the role of Mill Creek Canyon Earthworks Park and blending art and nature in an urban context. A choreography of experiences through land art, a multi-layered meadow, creek and forest will be stitched together by a coherent trail system, allowing varied experiences between visits and throughout the seasons.



Implementation

Creating excitement and momentum by early implementation is one of the goals of this framework plan. First interventions that prioritize access, connectivity and visibility will focus on improvements to Earthworks Park and Upstream Park, creating a draw between the two locations and anchoring Mill Creek Canyon Earthworks Park as an important connector within the City of Kent.



These six goals guide the framework plan and its implementation. The goals emerged from the community priorities and plans that provide context for Mill Creek Canyon Earthworks Park. At each stage of design and implementation these goals are intended to be revisited to articulate how the proposed work will achieve these outcomes.

Public Engagement

A public engagement process has directed the priorities of the Mill Creek Canyon Earthworks Park Framework Plan. The process and findings discussed in this section reflect Kent Parks priority of making the development of this plan as equitable as its outcomes.

Between June and September 2022, Kent Parks and Mithun collaborated on a multi-phase, mixed method public engagement effort to collect and interpret feedback about the Park. The goals for public engagement included:

- Increase awareness of the natural resources found within Mill Creek Canyon Earthworks Park
- Create engaging activities and event options for participants to provide feedback on the vision of the existing park and future phased improvements
- Gather feedback and organize responses to provide an accurate reflection of community vision and need

These goals guided a two-phase engagement strategy:

Phase 1 included an online survey and in-person workshop events at Earthworks Park to guide design and plan development. Phase 2 included an online survey, an in-person event and an open comment period at the Kent Downtown Library asking for feedback on the preliminary designs and plans. This helped balance the relative strengths and weaknesses of each method and reached a diverse group of people through multiple outreach approaches. An online survey, for example, favored responses by computer-literate community members and quantitative results. In contrast, in-person events allowed Kent Parks staff opportunities to engage community members directly and collect more qualitative information. Together, the two data collection methods yielded information highlighting community perceptions, use, and the vision for Mill Creek Canyon Earthworks Park.

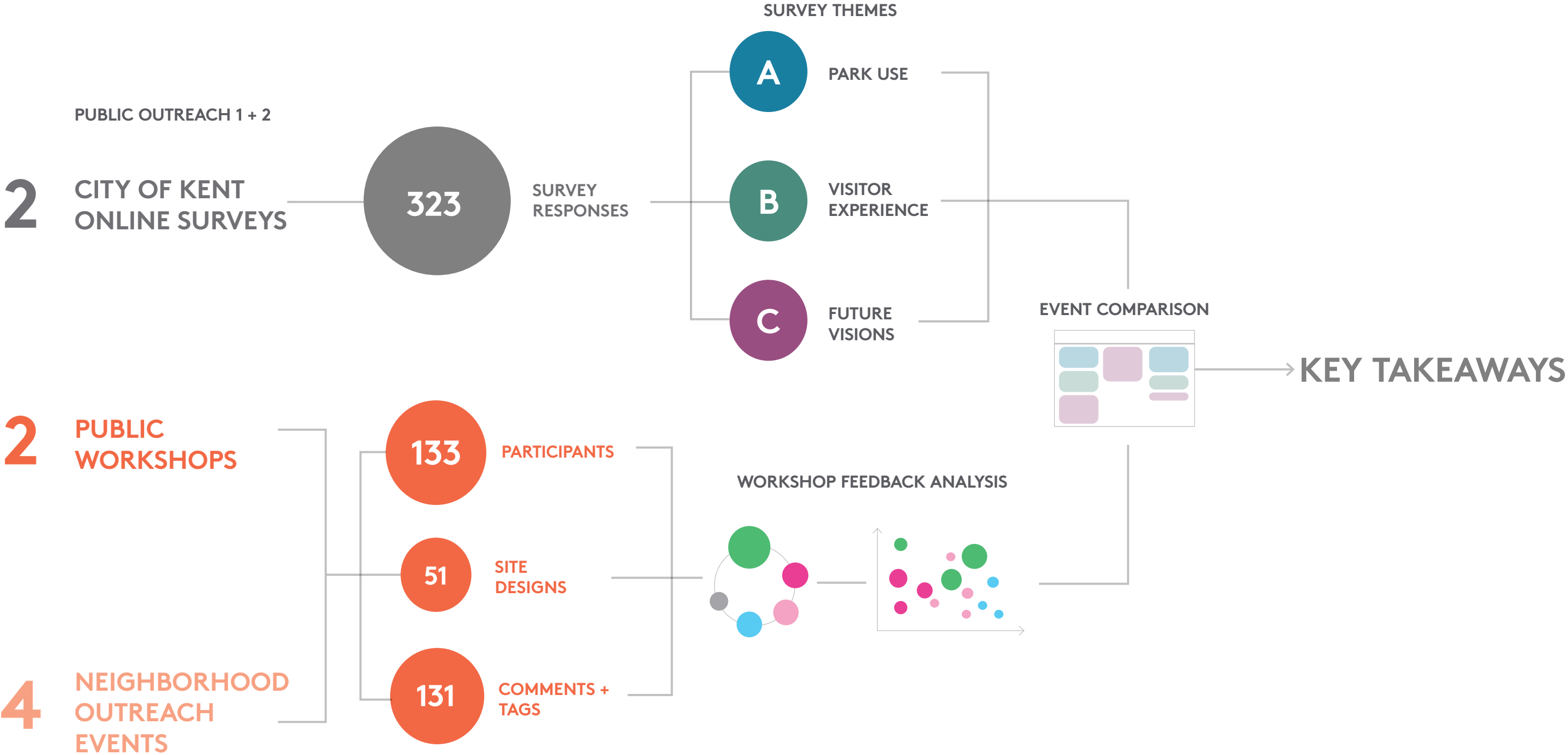
Outcome:

In the Public Engagement section of the appendix, community feedback from both survey and in-person events are reported in 'raw' and synthesis form. Question-level findings from the survey are analyzed against workshop activities and conversational findings. All three sets of findings were coded as Park Use, Visitor Experience, or Future Visions, and then findings for each code or theme consolidated into 'Key Takeaways.'

"This park has so much potential. I live a few blocks from the park, but have only visited a few times...I end up driving to other parks to walk even though there is this beautiful canyon within walking distance of my house." —Survey Respondent



Synthesis of Key Take Aways



PARK USE

Most park users visit both Earthworks Park and Mill Creek Canyon

Trail improvements appeal to both first time and repeat visitors

Lack of awareness, reduced programming, and lack of maintenance have reduced the number and frequency of park visits over the years

VISITOR EXPERIENCE

Park visitors appreciate the biodiversity and 'natural' character of Mill Creek Canyon

Programmed experiences are comparatively implementable and could improve perceptions of comfort in the park

Wayfinding will improve accessibility **within** the park, while neighborhood connectivity improves access **to** the park

FUTURE VISIONS

Prioritizing circulation will address community needs and support additional physical and experiential interventions

Park improvements are an opportunity to engage a variety of users with the environment and history of Mill Creek Canyon and Earthworks Park

Park improvements must balance community visions, natural resources, and maintenance capacity



85.5% of survey respondents had visited the park

Lack of awareness is a significant limitation to park use



Trail improvements encourage more frequent repeat visitors (71.4%)

Top 3 requested park experiences:



TRAIL IMPROVEMENTS + MAP KIOSKS



ART + PLAY NETWORK



NATIVE PLANTINGS + ECOLOGICAL RESTORATION

Assessment

Mill Creek Canyon Earthworks Park is the centerpiece of the Kent Park system and includes multiple ecological, recreational, cultural and natural resources that provide a foundation for adding layered experiences that appeal to a growing and diverse population. This summary highlights six main assessments, with related maps of the existing conditions of the park and canyon. Challenges and opportunities for each are listed and described in more detail in the full framework plan document.

- **Earthworks Park:** A culturally significant environmental artwork, Earthworks Park is an anchor experience. Preserving, restoring, and increasing access for visitors of all abilities, while also maintaining and managing the original design intent of this historic landmark landscape will contribute to multiple outcomes – a healthy downtown, an activated canyon and community gathering space, and memory-making through increased programming.
- **Regional Connectivity:** Mill Creek Canyon Earthworks Park is a central civic and regional destination with planned policies to improve access for pedestrians, bikers and transit users identified in the City’s Transportation Master Plan (TR-1, 4, 17, 19, 43, 45, 47).
- **The Mill Creek Canyon Earthworks Park Framework Plan** updates the 20-year vision for the future of this important greenway. The plan is developed in the spirit of the city’s comprehensive plan, including the multimodal goals of the 2021 Transportation Master Plan (TMP), which prioritizes Safety, Connectivity, Strategy, Stewardship and Placemaking. Some of the larger elements and projects are costly and require coordination with entities outside of Kent, such as the Washington Department of Transportation for programming, development and implementation. The City intends to explore these project concepts in a future TMP update where they will be prioritized among other critical projects city-wide, and if appropriate, will then move through a more comprehensive planning and design process.
- **Neighborhood Connectivity:** Improve multi-modal accessibility and connectivity between neighborhoods, downtown Kent and future mixed use redevelopment through the park and canyon identified in the City’s land use plan and Parks and Open Space Plan. This connectivity will diversify experiences, increase the number of people that benefit from healthy connections to nature and support an economically robust community.
- **Park and Canyon Access + Trails:** Improve trails and trailhead systems to create awareness, visibility and identify enhanced, inclusive, healthy experiences throughout the park and canyon where everyone feels invested in the benefits.
- **Mill Creek + Stormwater:** Steward a healthy Salish Sea, Mill Creek Canyon Watershed, and support healthy habitat for native species in Mill Creek Canyon with green stormwater infrastructure and management.
- **Natural Resources:** Native ecosystems connect people to diverse experiences of nature and offer health benefits of being within varied habitats of plants and animals throughout the park and canyon.

A large-scale analysis and assessment process were prepared in order to understand the rich layers of history, ecology and cultural significance the park has provided over the years.



Earthworks Park

A culturally significant environmental artwork, Earthworks Park is an anchor experience in Kent and the region. Preserving, restoring, maintaining, and managing the original design intent of this historic landmark landscape will contribute to multiple outcomes – a healthy downtown, increased park access for surrounding neighbors, an activated canyon and community gathering area.

Challenges:

- Limited ADA accessibility on paths
- Lack of programmatic activation
- Maintenance and management of restroom facilities
- Maintenance and management of flood events
- Maintenance and management of invasive plants
- Vandalism and other negative uses of the park
- Limited awareness of the public art and canyon access

Opportunities:

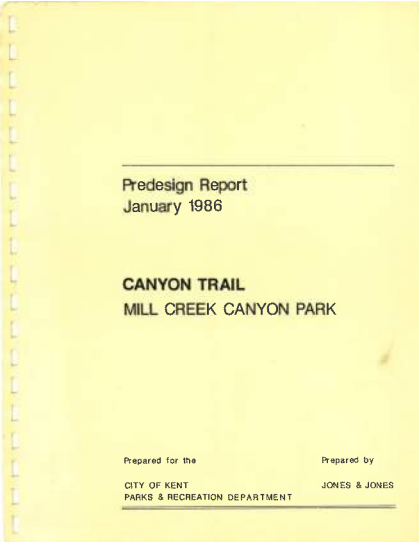
- Restoring, preserving, maintaining, and managing the original design intent of the park
- Improve all-ability access through the park
- Future Bus Rapid Transit stop on Canyon Drive (SR 516) at Earthworks Park
- Event programming to activate space and recall cultural history
- Restroom renovation
- Titus Festival Street for temporary and pop-up activation and events with future street improvements if this proves successful and popular
- Flood risk reduction and habitat restoration



A gathering at Earthworks Park from the Kent Parks Archives



1982 Site Master Plan Update, Jones & Jones



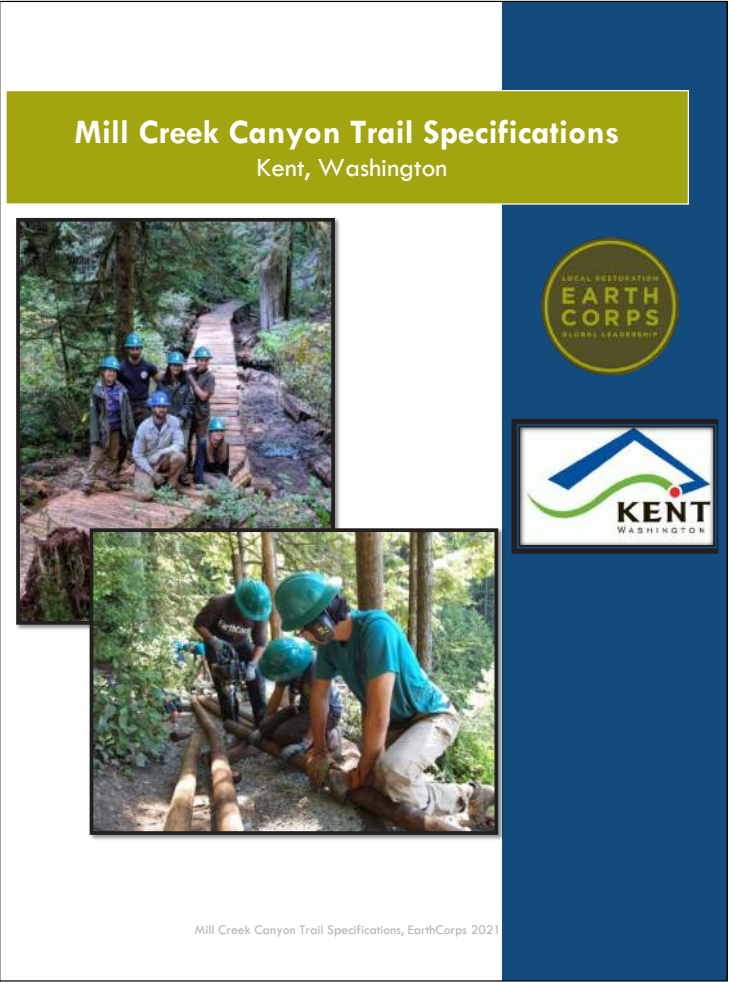
1986 Canyon Trail Predesign Report, Jones & Jones



2011 Mill Creek Canyon Trail Feasibility Study



2022 Kent Park and Open Space Plan



2021 Mill Creek Canyon Trail Specifications

Regional Connectivity

Mill Creek Canyon Earthworks Park is a central civic and regional destination with planned and potential increased access for pedestrians, cyclists and transit users. It also serves as a gateway between neighborhoods and a hub that connects the regional trail system and Kent's downtown transit station.


Challenges:

- Local and regional awareness of park and canyon
- Connections between downtown, surrounding neighborhoods and the park are lacking or in need of improvements
- Visibility and lack of trailhead access into the park is often a deterrent. The park is often mistaken for a greenbelt instead of a park with trails. There is a need to encourage positive use of the space and to support safety.
- Access from the surrounding areas to the parks is often interrupted, particularly by Canyon Drive (State Route 516) that limits access from the East Hill neighborhood.

Opportunities:

- Improve pedestrian access to downtown Kent
- Create enhanced access between the East Hill neighborhood to Mill Creek Canyon Earthworks Park.
- Pedestrian and bicycle access to 277th (Transportation Master Plan Appendix N-24), Interurban and the Green River Trail, and other multi-modal trails can connect to Kent Memorial Park, local schools, and downtown
- Connect park to existing and planned bike and pedestrian infrastructure
- Increase access to retail businesses and reduce local car trips with canyon crossings that support future mixed-use opportunities

Legend

- | | | | |
|---|-------------------------|---|---------------------|
|  | PARK LAND |  | BIKE FACILITY |
|  | FUTURE DEVELOPMENT |  | MULTI-PURPOSE TRAIL |
|  | HISTORIC LAND ART SITES |  | SITES OF INTEREST |
|  | SITE BOUNDARY | | |
|  | MEET ME ON MEEKER | | |





Neighborhood Connectivity

Improve multi-modal accessibility and connectivity between neighborhoods, downtown Kent and future mixed use redevelopment through the park and canyon, identified in the City's Parks and Open Space Plan. This connectivity will diversify experiences, increase the number of people that benefit from healthy connections to nature and support an economically robust community.

Challenges:

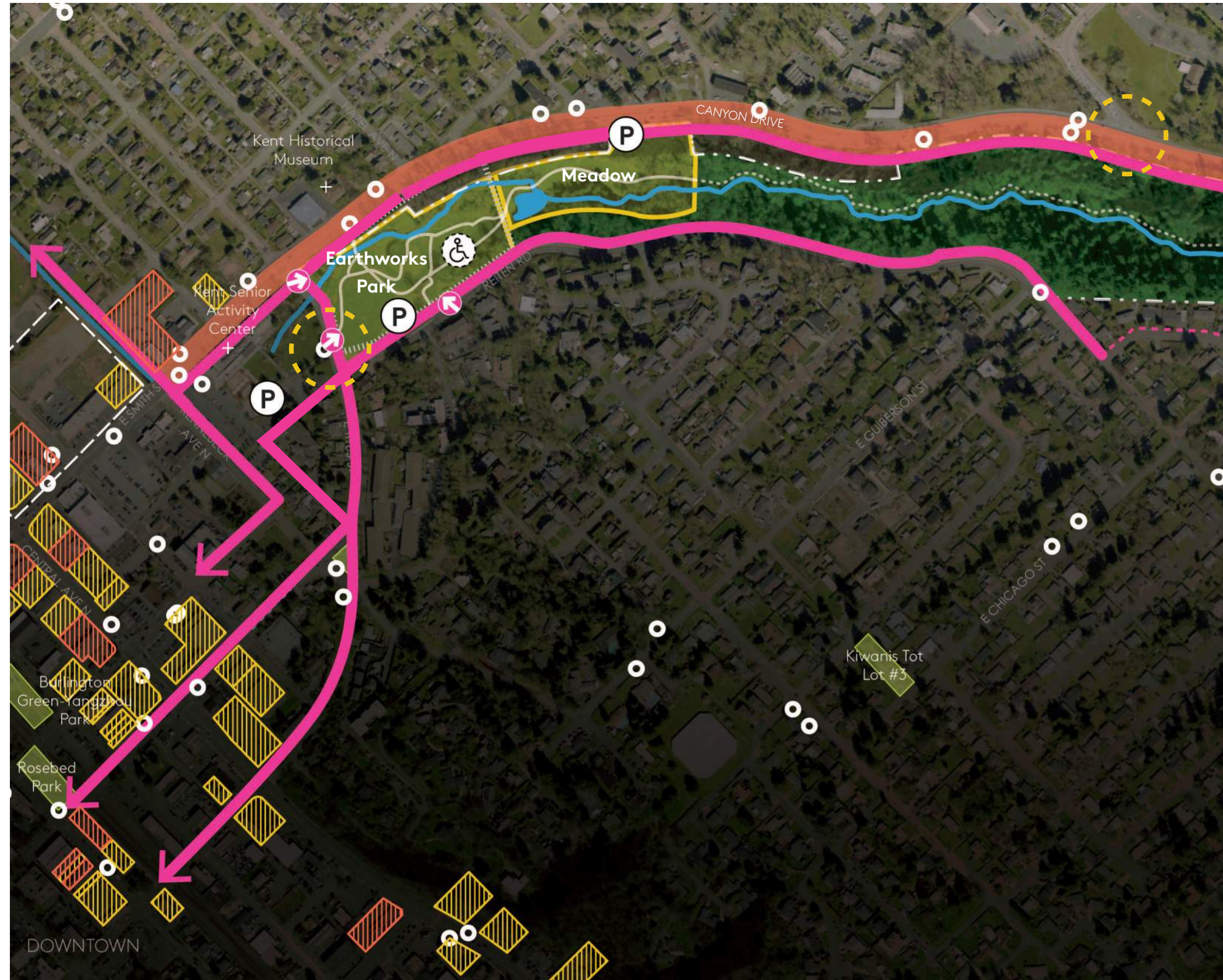
- Canyon Drive (State Route 516) creates a barrier for the East Hill neighborhood to access the park with incomplete sidewalks and limited crossings
- Limited crossings to access the canyon from the East Hill neighborhood and the middle and high schools
- Limited wayfinding and signage to direct people from residential neighborhoods and downtown to Earthworks and the canyon trail network
- All-ability trails are limited

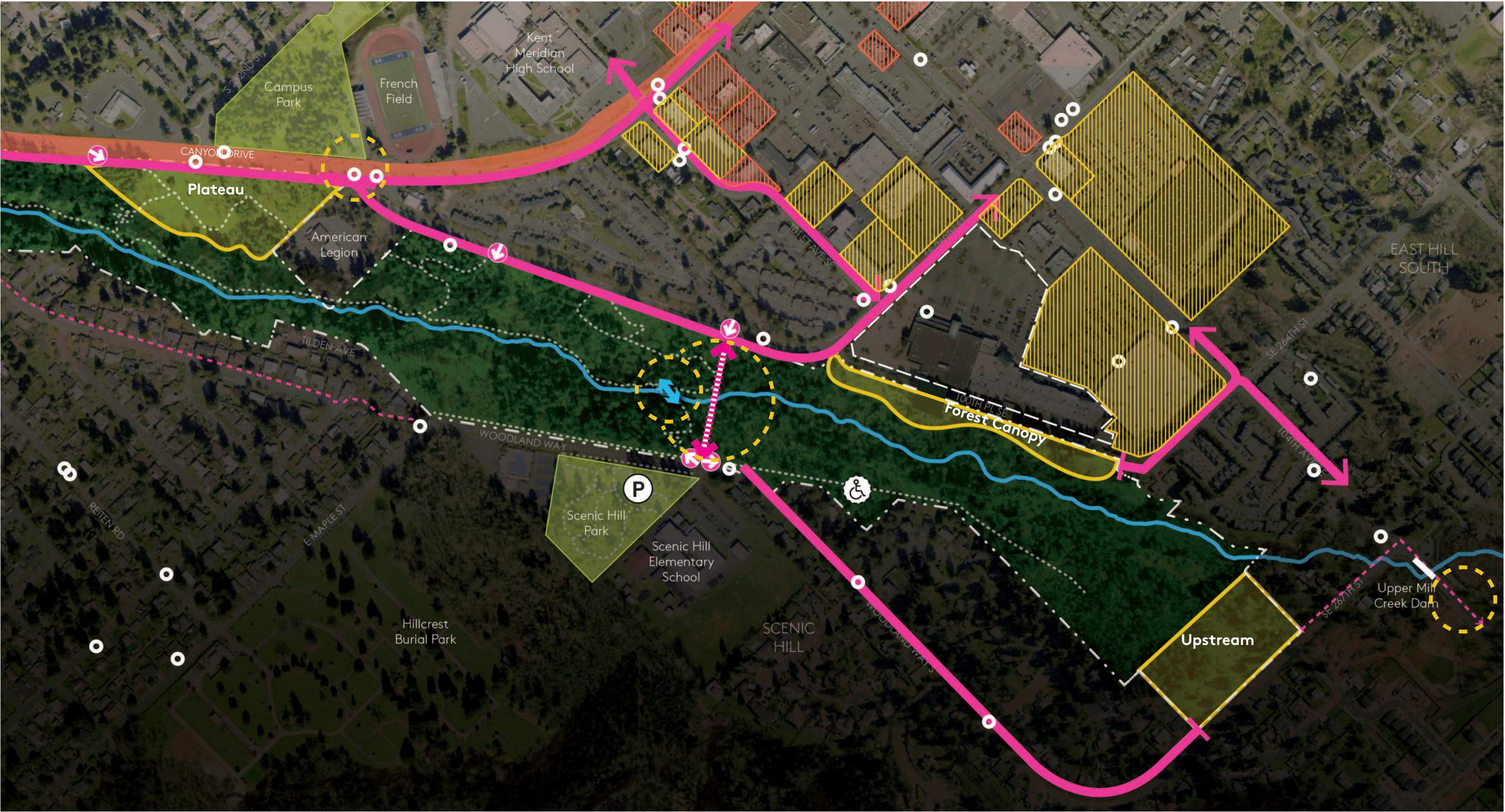
Opportunities:

- Improve neighborhood connectivity for a diverse group of park users, including ADA accessibility
- More crossings to access the canyon from the East Hill neighborhood, Campus Park, senior center, the middle and high schools and connecting multi-family apartment complexes
- Expanded wayfinding and signage for local users from residential neighborhoods and downtown

Legend

----- SITE BOUNDARY	----- PARK TRAILS
PARKING	MILL CREEK
ADA PATH	RETAIL STORE
EXISTING PARK ENTRANCES	RESTAURANTS
TRANSIT STOPS	PROPOSED PARK IMPROVEMENT SITES
POTENTIAL PEDESTRIAN CANYON CROSSING	PARK LAND
SIDEWALK WITH CURB	POSSIBLE PEDESTRIAN IMPROVEMENTS
GREENWAY	





Park Access + Trails

Improve trail and trailhead system to create awareness, visibility and identify enhanced, inclusive experiences throughout the park and canyon where everyone feels invested and immersed in natural resources and the benefits.

Challenges:

- Limited legibility of the rim walkways around the canyon
- Lack of wayfinding and signage
- Limited road crossings and trailheads to access the park, especially from East Hill neighborhood
- Limited ADA access in and around canyon and Earthworks Park

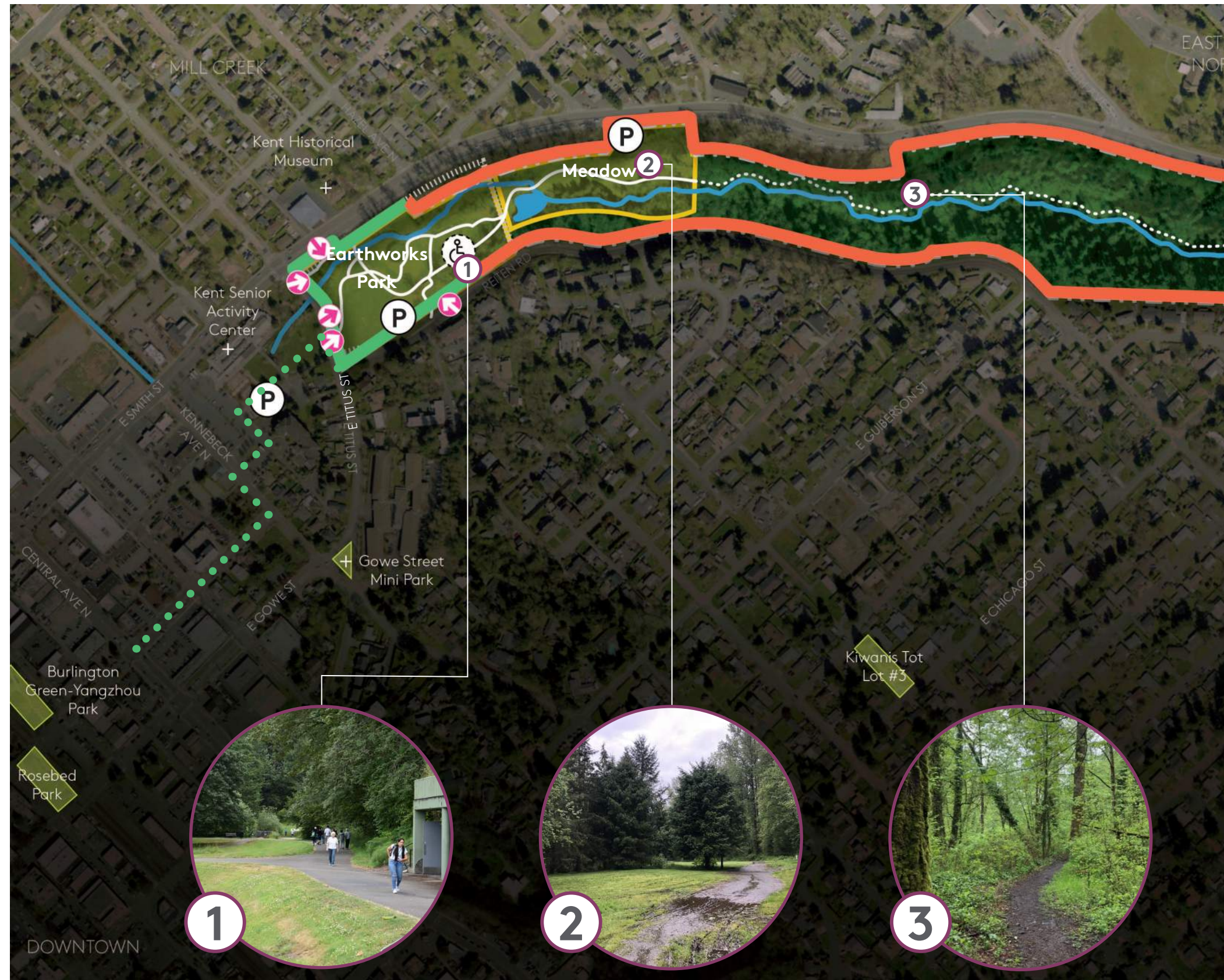
Opportunities:

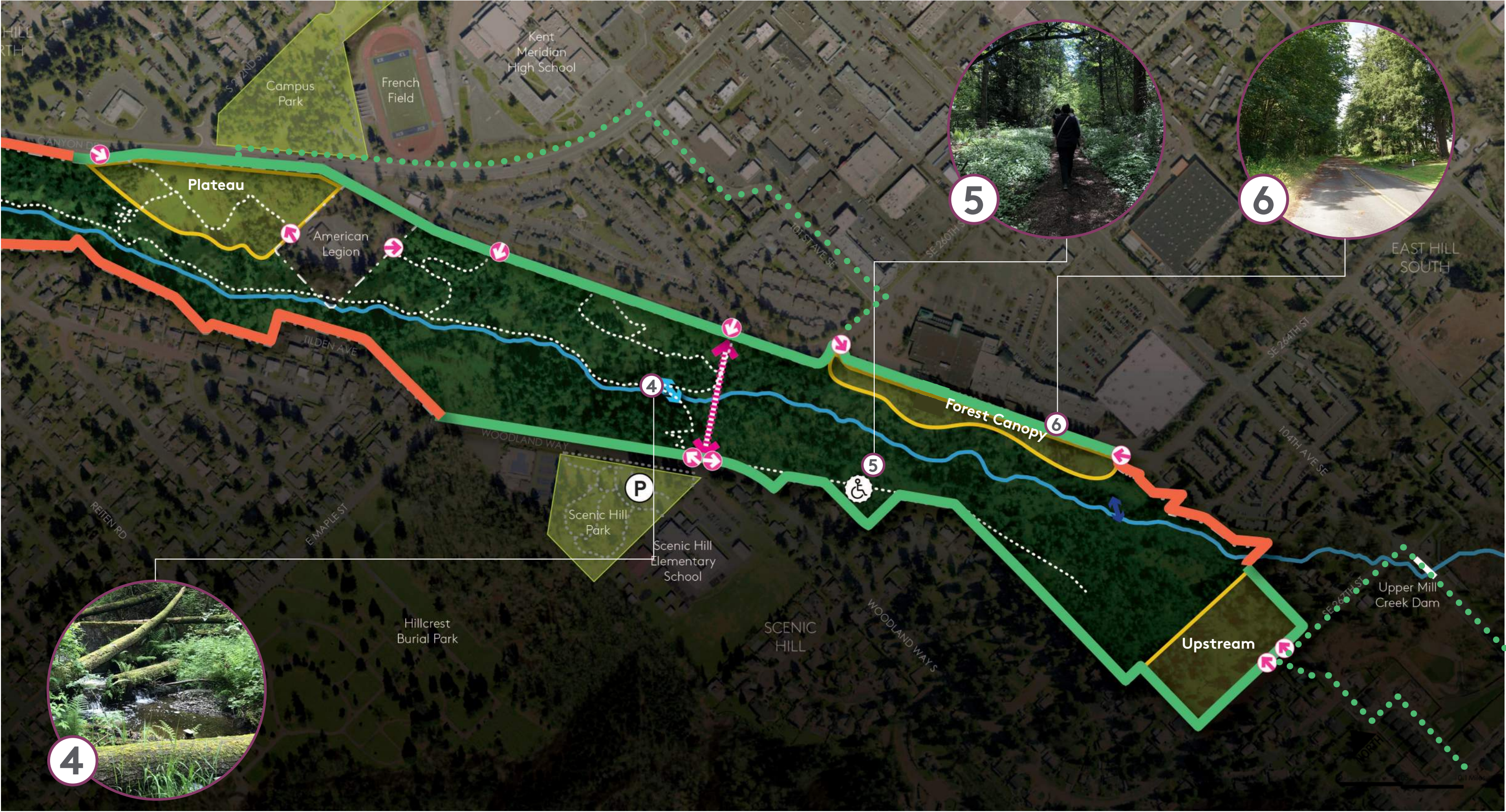
- Increase equitable access to the park for the East Hill neighborhood
- Enrich the ADA accessible trail experiences throughout the park
- Improve cross-canyon connections to reduce local car trips, support future mixed use redevelopment and create loop trail experiences
- Develop 100th St Forest Canopy entrance access to connect high school and civic institutions with park
- Create an improved off-street connection between 248th, Campus Park and Mill Creek Canyon (P&OS 2022).
- Create crossings to connect Scenic Hill and East Hill. Crossings to include bridges at strategic locations or connectivity and views of the canyon (P&OS 2022).
- Integrate signage, wayfinding, public art and planting strategies across the park to increase trailhead visibility and attract more park users

Legend

---	SITE BOUNDARY	—	LIMITED ACCESS*
(P)	PARKING	—	POTENTIAL ACCESS*
(♿)	ADA PATH	• • • •	POTENTIAL NEIGHBORHOOD ACCESS
➡	EXISTING PARK ENTRANCES	—	PAVED PARK PATH
➡	POTENTIAL PARK ENTRANCES	• • • •	PARK TRAIL
➡	PROPOSED PEDESTRIAN CANYON CROSSING	■	PROPOSED PARK IMPROVEMENT SITES
—	MILL CREEK	■	PARK LAND

*Limited access refers to the limitations of developing trail access in certain areas due to steep slope edge conditions, unstable ground, and riparian buffer. Potential access are the areas that are less steep and have enough space to build trailheads, switch backs and trails.





Mill Creek and Stormwater

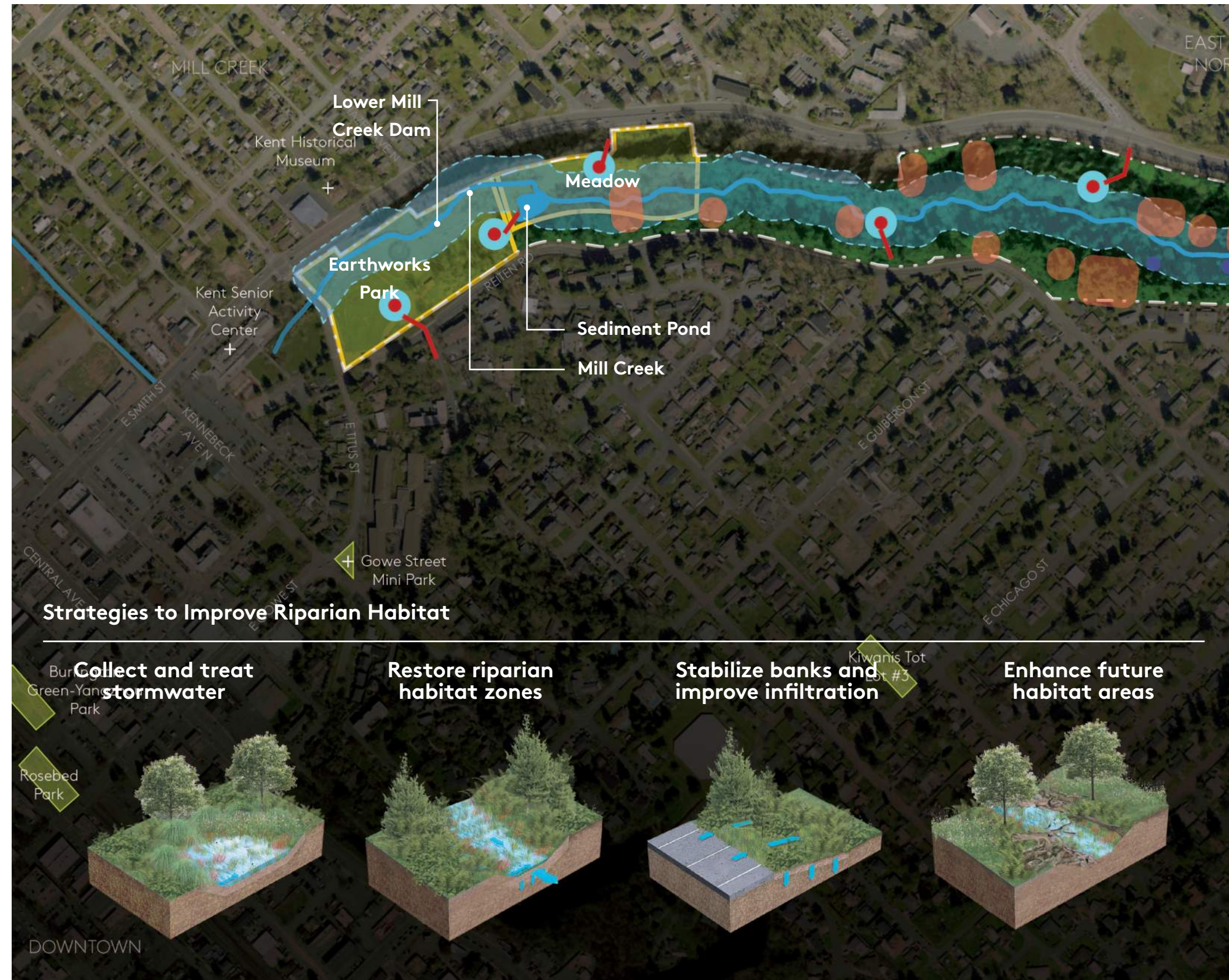
Steward a healthy Mill Creek Watershed, Salish Sea and support healthy habitat for native species in Mill Creek Canyon with green stormwater infrastructure and management.

Challenges:

- Steep slopes of the canyon create unstable banks and water seepage which lead to erosion and landslides
- Large storm events cause sediment deposits downstream
- Undefined water sources and quantities are seeping into the canyon making it hard to manage the flow of the dam

Opportunities:

- Water quality monitoring can be combined with citizen science and school programs
- Bank stabilization and sedimentation control can be managed through riparian restoration and trail maintenance
- Upstream and downstream riparian corridor improvements such as sedimentation control and invasive plant removal can be integrated with trail and park improvements
- Green stormwater infrastructure can slow peak flows at new park development locations
- Stormwater treatment and controls from surrounding roads





Natural Resources

Native ecosystems connect people to nature and provide health benefits of having diverse experiences with varied habitats of plants and animals throughout the park and canyon.

Challenges:

- Prolific spread of non-native plant communities
- Size of large natural area to steward
- Social impact management of park including trash clean up and social trail restoration outweighs time spent on ecological restoration
- Limited natural resources staff spread across a large system

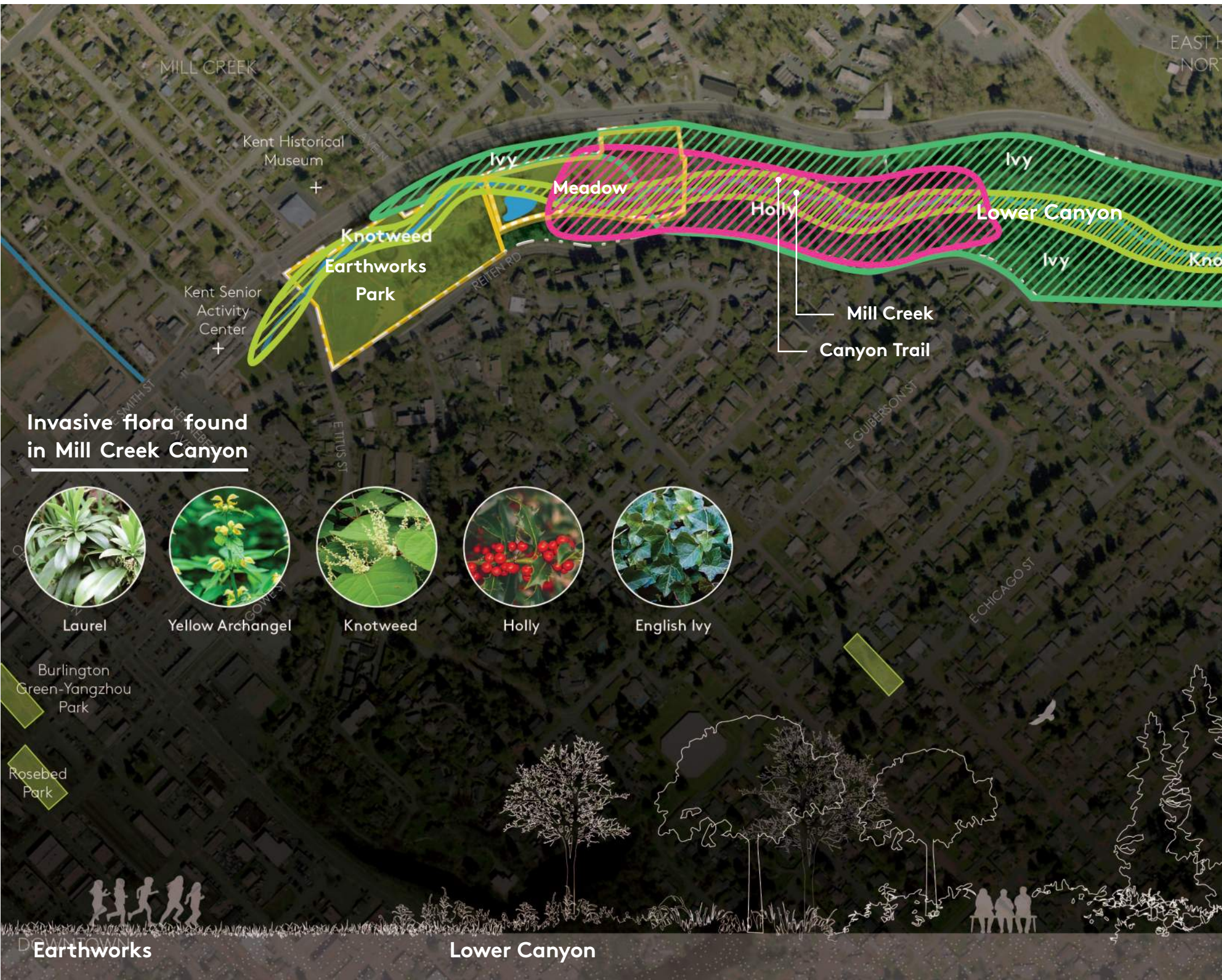
Opportunities:

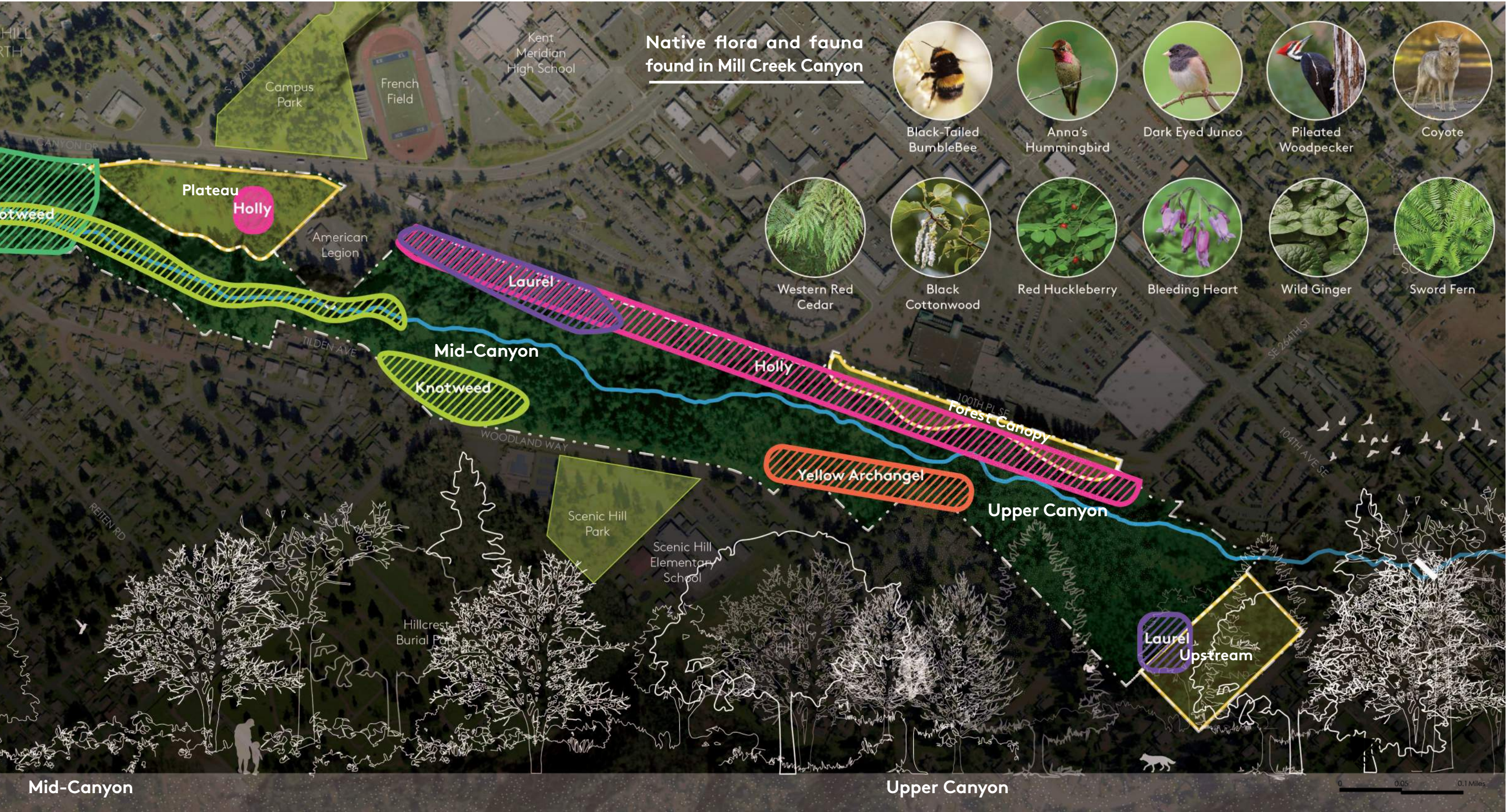
- Restoration volunteer events to connect people as stewards of the park and canyon and to each other
- Connect people to mental and physical health benefits of being in nature
- Citizen science opportunities for local organizations
- Potential for partnership with local tribes and organizations
- Protect the biodiversity of an important riparian corridor identified by Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife
- This corridor is habitat for species listed under the Endangered Species Act, as well as the coho salmon, which have significantly depleted populations.

Legend

	FUTURE OPPORTUNITY SITE		INVASIVE HOLLY
	PARK LAND		INVASIVE KNOTWEED
	SITE BOUNDARY		INVASIVE ENGLISH IVY
	MILL CREEK		INVASIVE LAUREL
			INVASIVE YELLOW ARCHANGEL

*Invasives are mixed with native understory





Park-Wide Improvement Strategies

The Mill Creek Canyon Earthworks Park Framework Plan was prompted, in part by the need to respond to the needs of a growing and diverse community. This framework plan takes an integrated approach to the holistic park experience that reflects community needs and stitches together rich and varied experiences of the park and canyon. Proposed park-wide improvements are described here in the context of implementing regional and neighborhood connectivity, access and trails, park amenities, amenity-based storm-water solutions, and natural resources. These park-wide interventions are woven together with a cohesive and recognizable network of trailheads, trails and a wayfinding system leveraging this place's unique aspects, iconic public art and intentional nature experiences. They all correspond to the plan's goals that fall within the categories history + culture, health + connections, trail improvements, equity, natural resources, and implementation.

Priority Actions:

Regional Connectivity

- Each park planning effort should look beyond the park's boundaries for interdepartmental partnerships to achieve the plan's vision and goals.
- South: Connect neighborhoods and park users to the region via the Green River Trail by establishing a trailhead with bicycle facility at the Upstream location and connecting to the trail at 277th, as prioritized in the Parks and Open Space Plan.
- North: Enhance connections between neighborhoods, park and downtown Kent (P-85) by increasing accessibility to the trailheads; improving walkability through the park and canyon and across Titus Street by improving existing crossings to Senior Center and Downtown; and implementing the protected bike facility along Canyon Drive (SR 516) as planned in the Transportation Master Plan Project P-19 and P-85.

Neighborhood Connectivity

- In early phases, implement proposed crossings at Canyon Drive identified in the Parks and Open Space Plan, including exploration of multi benefits of and potential for funding for a longer term overpass pedestrian bridge at Campus Park.
- Develop a technical exploration, multi benefit assessment and potential funding for an upper canyon rim to rim pedestrian bridge.
- Develop Upstream Park/trailhead in support of neighborhood connectivity to Downtown Kent as a destination that brings awareness and anchors the extents of Mill Creek Canyon Earthworks Park, supporting future adjacent redevelopment.

Park Access + Trails

- Strategically modify trails in Earthworks Park to improve ADA access.
- Continue trail restoration partnership with EarthCorps and natural resources division of operations and implement paving modifications for the Accessible Meadow Loop.
- Develop a wayfinding system that highlights trailhead access and communicates the level of difficulty and range of experiences as an integrated and coherent trailhead wayfinding system. An early phase to create engaging trailheads with increased visibility by integrating wayfinding, public art, and iconic native planting to create a visually connected series of place-based experiences.

Park Improvement Amenities

- Celebrate the Earthworks historic landmark site, increase accessibility and regenerate cultural programs at Earthworks Park.
- Establish a destination at both ends of the canyon by developing the Upstream Trailhead/Park.
- Improve awareness and visibility of the park and canyon in an early phase with a coordinated series of trailheads that integrate wayfinding, iconic native planting, and public art.

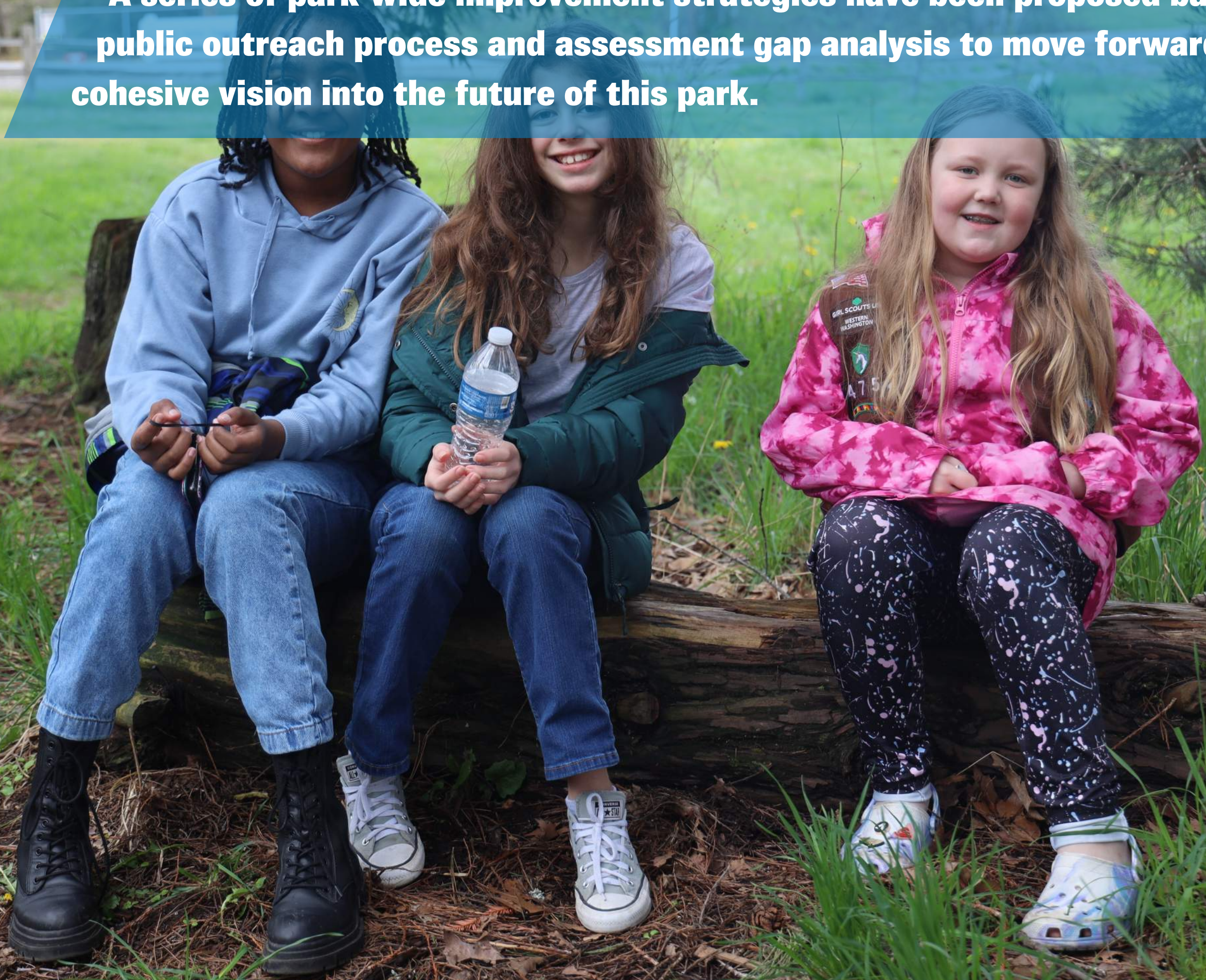
Natural Resources

- Study a multi-benefit strategy for simultaneously addressing invasives management, landslides, and erosion issues paired with other park improvements.
- Leverage the excitement expressed by the community to contribute to ecological restoration through work parties, resulting in deeper investment and awareness of Mill Creek Canyon Earthworks Park.
- Consider nature play moments alongside trail and trailhead or trailheads in early phases as well as plant identification signage, outdoor classrooms and partnership with local school and stewardship organizations.

Mill Creek + Stormwater

- Elevate effective stormwater management strategies that are contextual to the artistic landforms and continue the legacy of stormwater innovation at Earthworks Park.
- Further study/evaluation of water sources that contribute to downstream flooding to find the most efficacious methods of stormwater management, paired with continued efforts focused on streambank restoration.
- Continue to lead and collaborate with allied organizations that support overall watershed health with the goal of contributing to the health of salmon and other habitat downstream.

A series of park-wide improvement strategies have been proposed based on the public outreach process and assessment gap analysis to move forward with a cohesive vision into the future of this park.

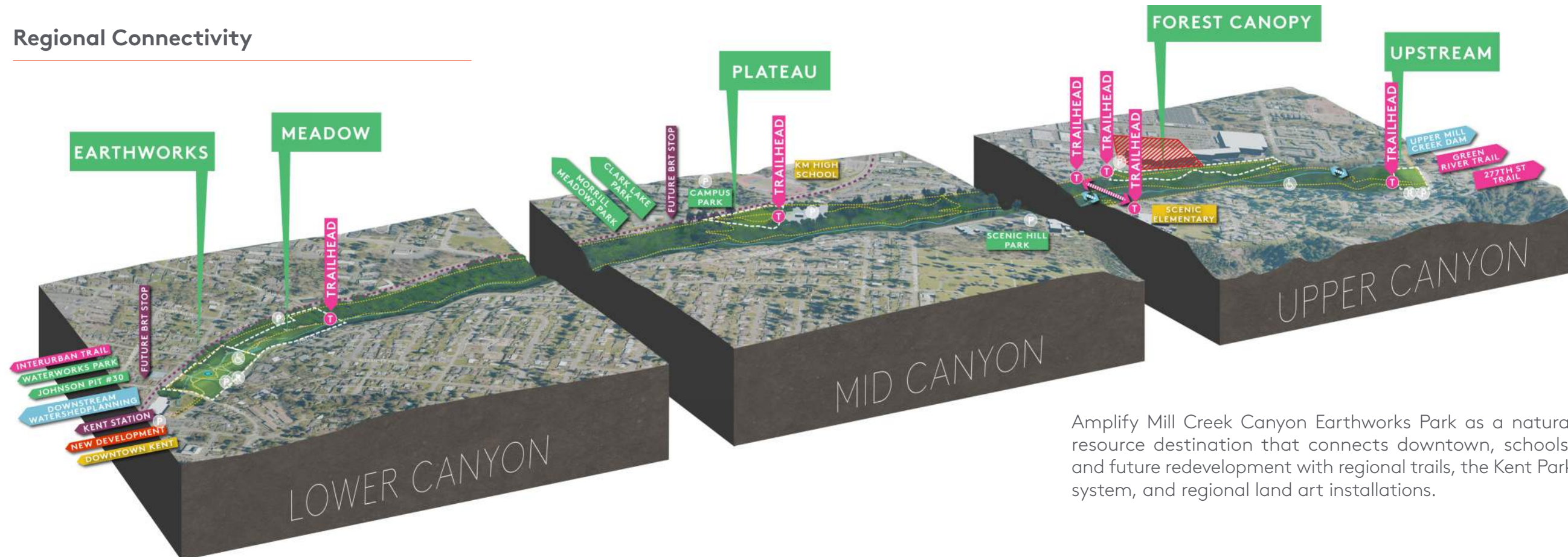


Park-Wide Improvement Strategies

This is an overview of the park-wide improvements that address the multiple ways the planned improvements will support people to interact with the park between their homes, work, schools, shopping, recreation, daily routines and special regional trips. The colors indicate what type of improvement strategy each intervention corresponds with.

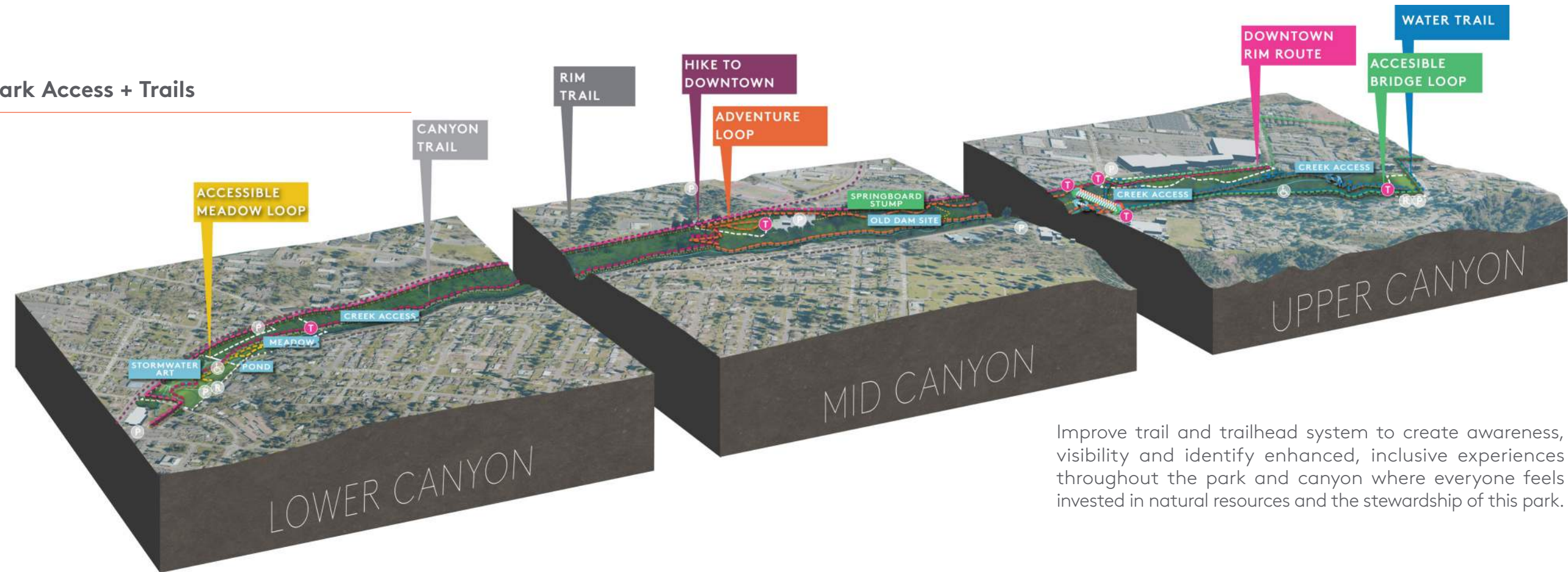
- TRAIL INFRASTRUCTURE
- HABITAT RESTORATION
- FACILITIES + NEIGHBORHOOD AMENITIES
- WATER INFRASTRUCTURE
- PLAY

Regional Connectivity



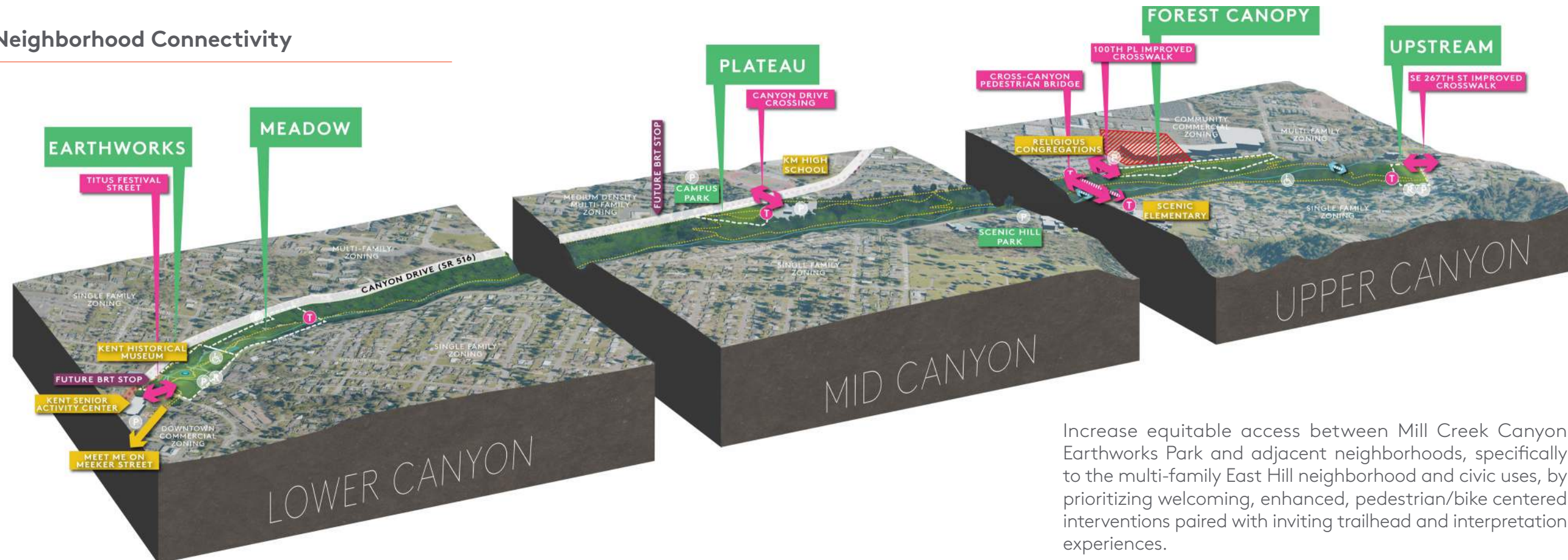
Amplify Mill Creek Canyon Earthworks Park as a natural resource destination that connects downtown, schools, and future redevelopment with regional trails, the Kent Park system, and regional land art installations.

Park Access + Trails



Improve trail and trailhead system to create awareness, visibility and identify enhanced, inclusive experiences throughout the park and canyon where everyone feels invested in natural resources and the stewardship of this park.

Neighborhood Connectivity

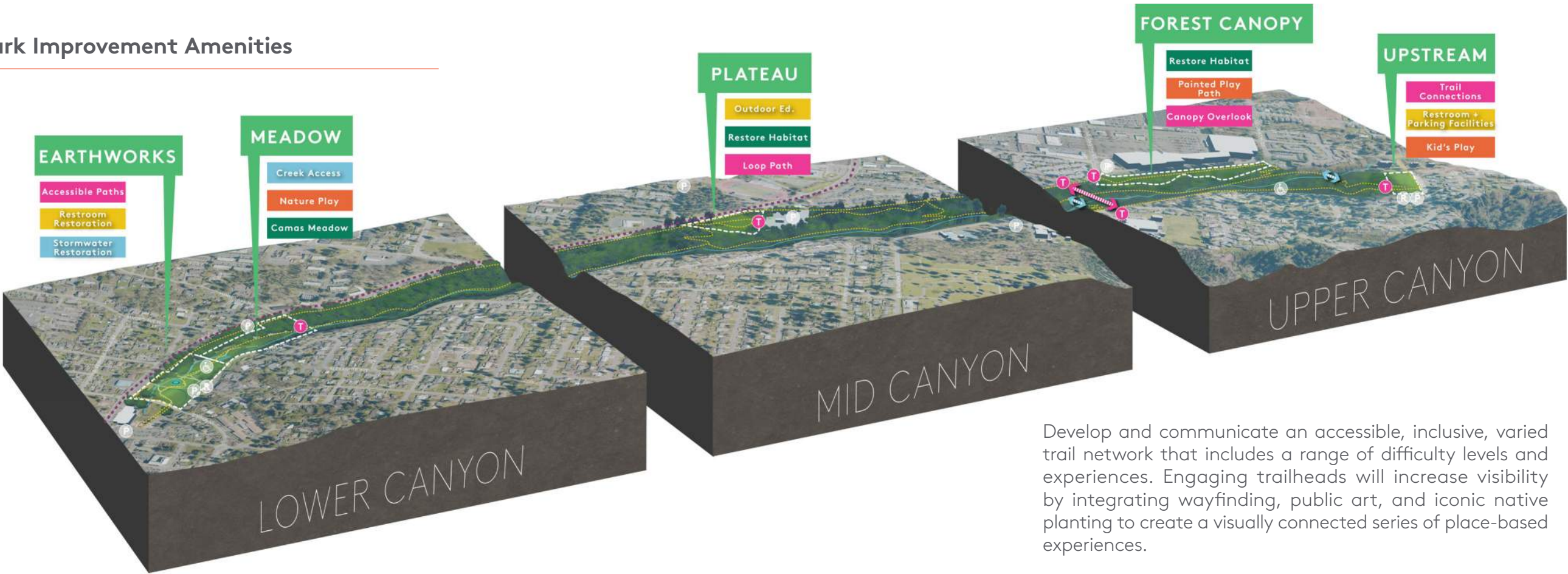


Increase equitable access between Mill Creek Canyon Earthworks Park and adjacent neighborhoods, specifically to the multi-family East Hill neighborhood and civic uses, by prioritizing welcoming, enhanced, pedestrian/bike centered interventions paired with inviting trailhead and interpretation experiences.

Park-Wide Improvement Strategies Continued

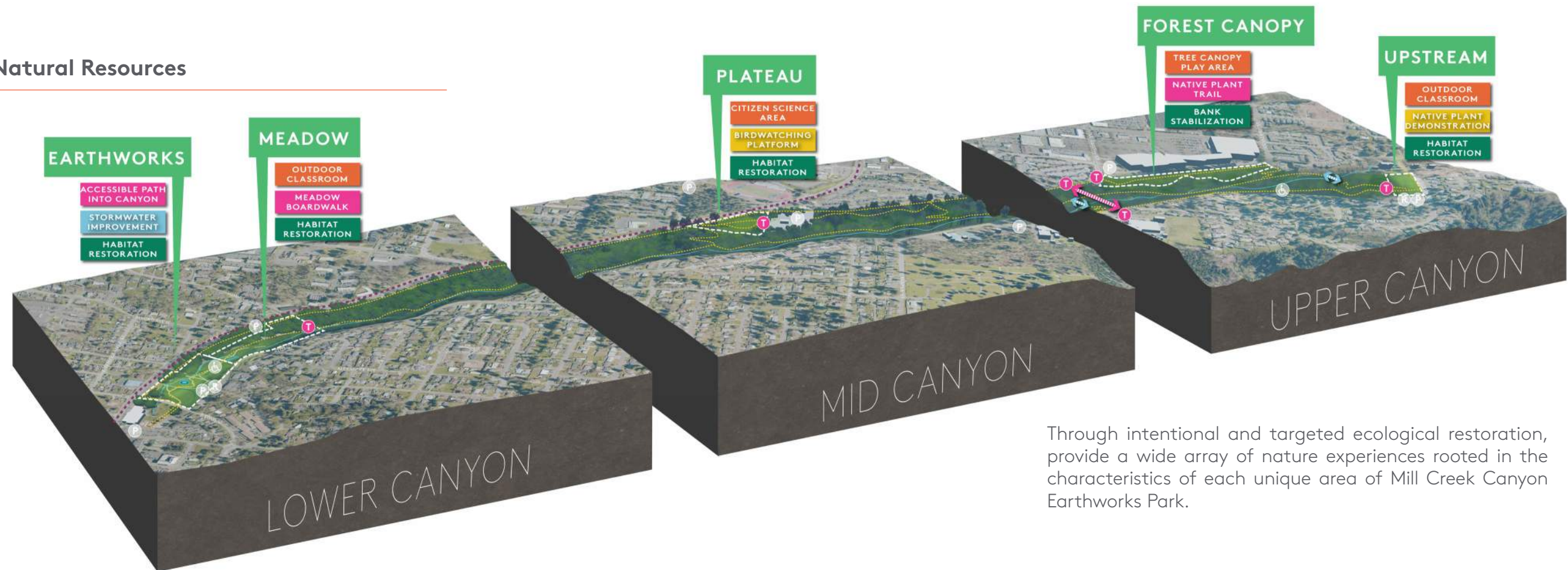
- TRAIL INFRASTRUCTURE
- HABITAT RESTORATION
- FACILITIES + NEIGHBORHOOD AMENITIES
- WATER INFRASTRUCTURE
- PLAY

Park Improvement Amenities



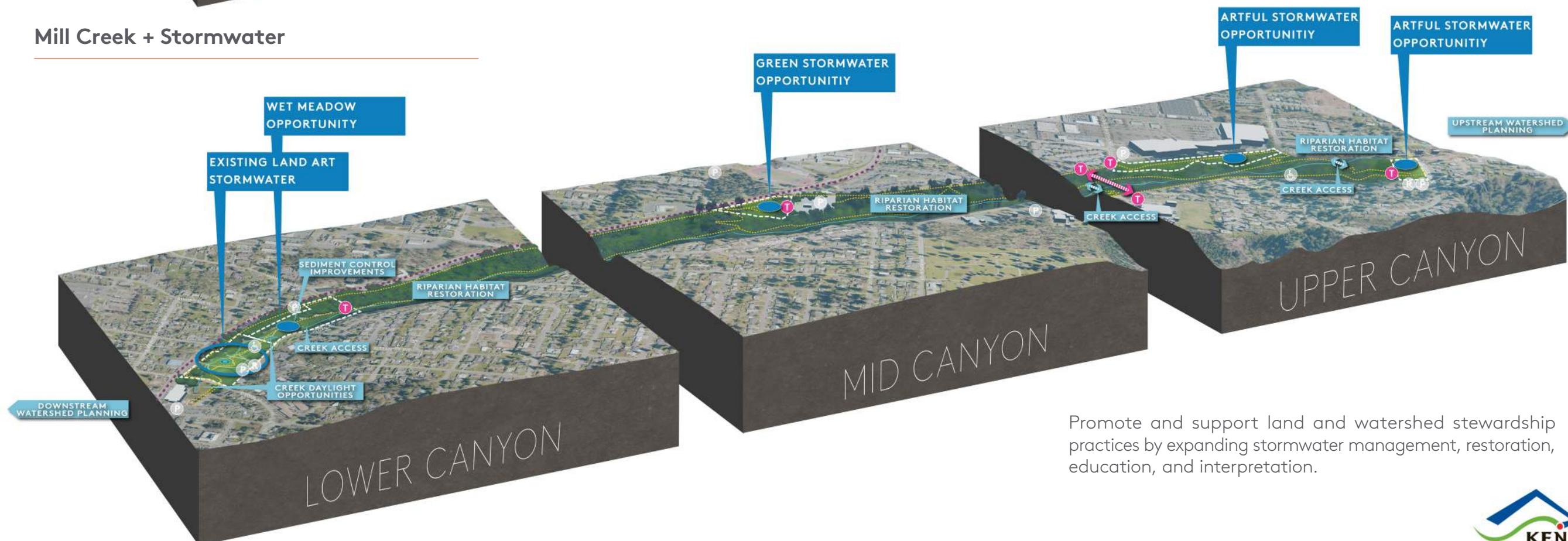
Develop and communicate an accessible, inclusive, varied trail network that includes a range of difficulty levels and experiences. Engaging trailheads will increase visibility by integrating wayfinding, public art, and iconic native planting to create a visually connected series of place-based experiences.

Natural Resources



Through intentional and targeted ecological restoration, provide a wide array of nature experiences rooted in the characteristics of each unique area of Mill Creek Canyon Earthworks Park.

Mill Creek + Stormwater



Promote and support land and watershed stewardship practices by expanding stormwater management, restoration, education, and interpretation.

Implementation

PHASING, FUNDING, OPERATIONS + MAINTENANCE.

Phasing Approach

Phasing the park and canyon improvements outlined in this framework plan has been based on multiple, integrated factors – community feedback, economic development opportunities, transportation and park funding potential, and a ten-year capital budget plan.

Community feedback that drives the phasing approach is multi-fold – a strong desire to create more awareness and visibility of the existing park, canyon and trail system; improvements and expansion of the trail system to serve all abilities and generations with varied experiences; and an interest in restoring Earthworks Park and reviving it's history of cultural programming.

An assessment of economic development opportunities suggests that prioritizing improvements at each end of the park and canyon will complement adjacent potential redevelopment sites and create regional trail connections that will bring more users to the park, canyon and downtown Kent. The former Top Food site to the south and the St Vincent de Paul site to the north both have long term potential for

housing and mixed use which creates synergy with the park and canyon.

Combined with a robust trail network, the opportunities makes multi-modal transportation and park funding appealing, especially in the context of a trail network that creates more equitable access to the park for the East Hill neighborhood and lifts barriers to expand bike and pedestrian network.

The ten-year capital budget plan will result in \$10m of investments in Mill Creek Canyon Earthworks Park. As grants, partnerships and other funding sources emerge through the development of the park system an additional \$4m is conservatively anticipated.

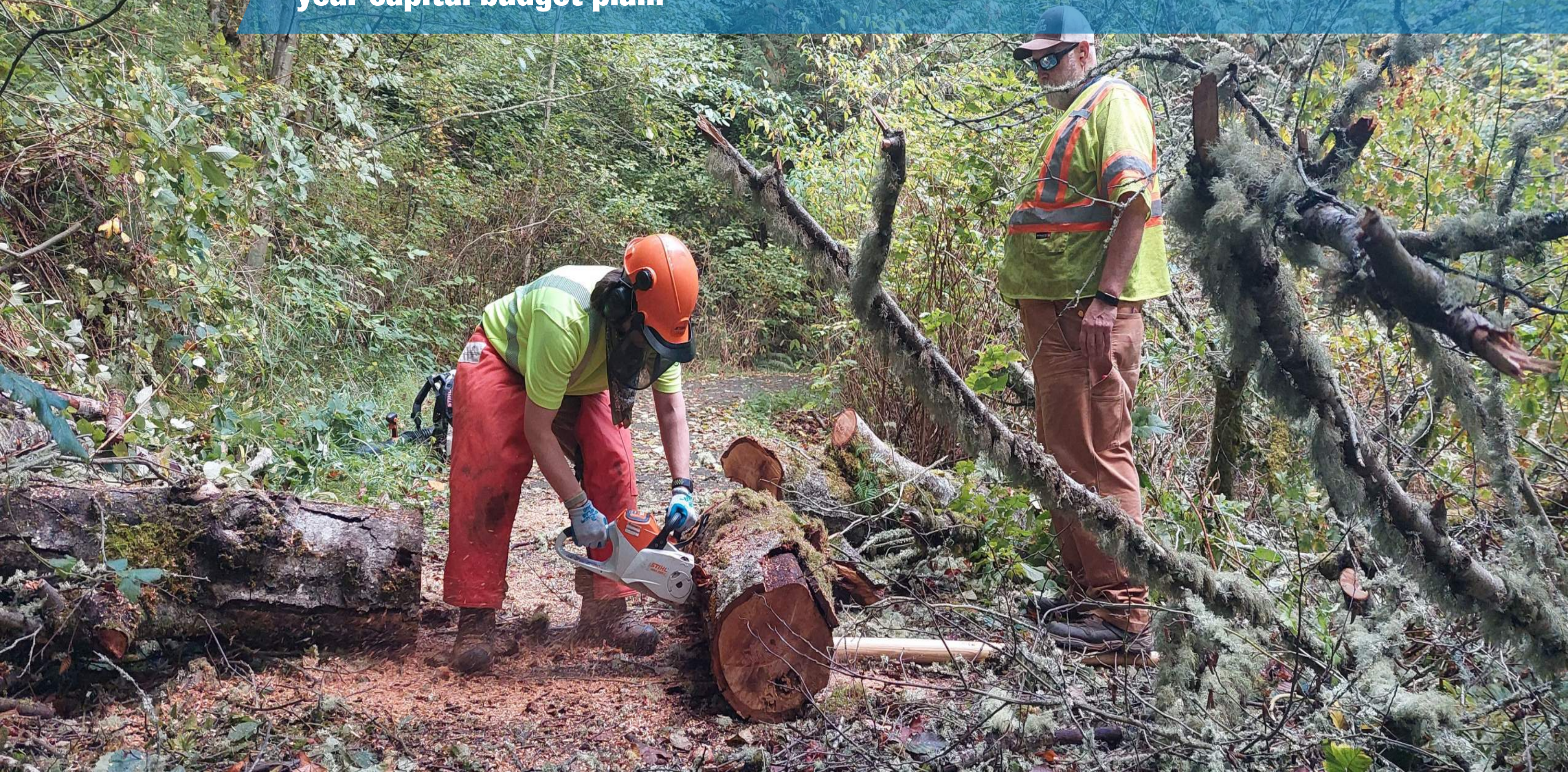
This Framework Plan updates the 20-year vision for the future of this important greenway. The plan is developed in the spirit of the city's comprehensive plan, including the multimodal goals of the 2021 Transportation Master Plan (TMP), which prioritizes Safety, Connectivity, Strategy, Stewardship and Placemaking. Some of the larger elements and projects are costly and require coordination with entities outside of Kent,

such as the Washington Department of Transportation for programming, development and implementation. The City intends to explore these project concepts in a future TMP update where they will be prioritized among other critical projects city-wide, and if appropriate, will then move through a more comprehensive planning and design process.

Financial Strategy, Operations + Maintenance

A well-planned, funded and executed O+M management plan is critical to the successful legacy of this public open space. A successful O+M and funding strategy will address routine and preventative maintenance, as well as adapt as more park improvements are integrated over time and park use increases as a result. Well-executed maintenance routines and preventative maintenance will prolong the lifecycle of the capital improvements and extend the value of the money invested at the outset, as it will reduce frequency by which they need to be replaced. Through this well-resourced and sustained approach, the city demonstrates its on-going commitment to the public and this place.

Phasing the park and canyon improvements is based on multiple, integrated factors – community feedback, early impact to create momentum, economic development opportunities, transportation and park funding potential, and a ten-year capital budget plan.



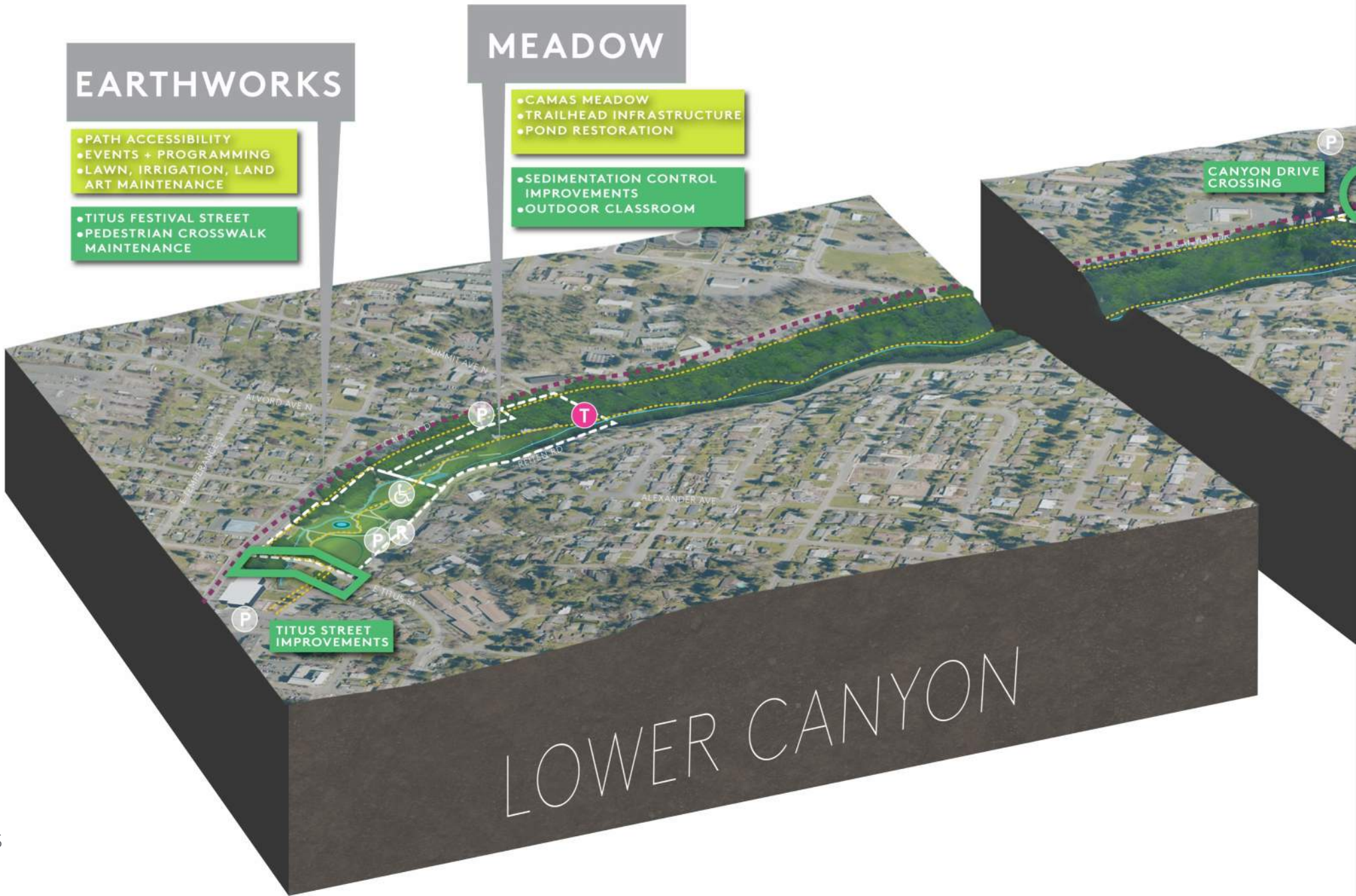
Financial Strategy, Operations + Maintenance

These capital budget plans are an investment in Mill Creek Canyon Earthworks Park that prioritize project goals and community preferences for park improvements, allowing phasing over twenty years as funding sources emerge. O + M funding will address routine and preventative maintenance as well as adapt as park improvements are implemented and park use increases.

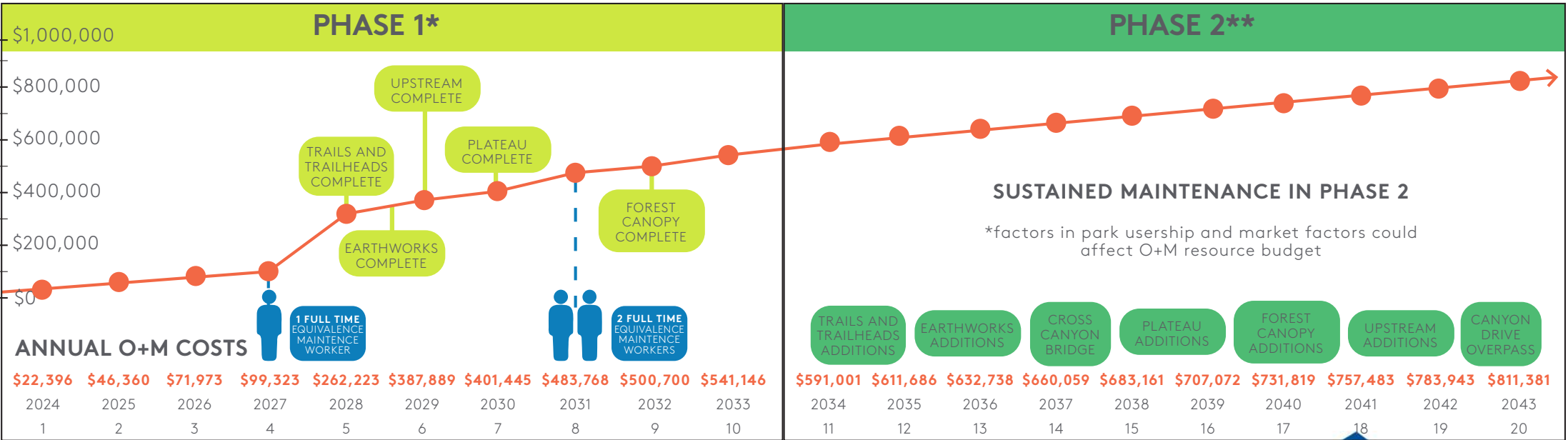
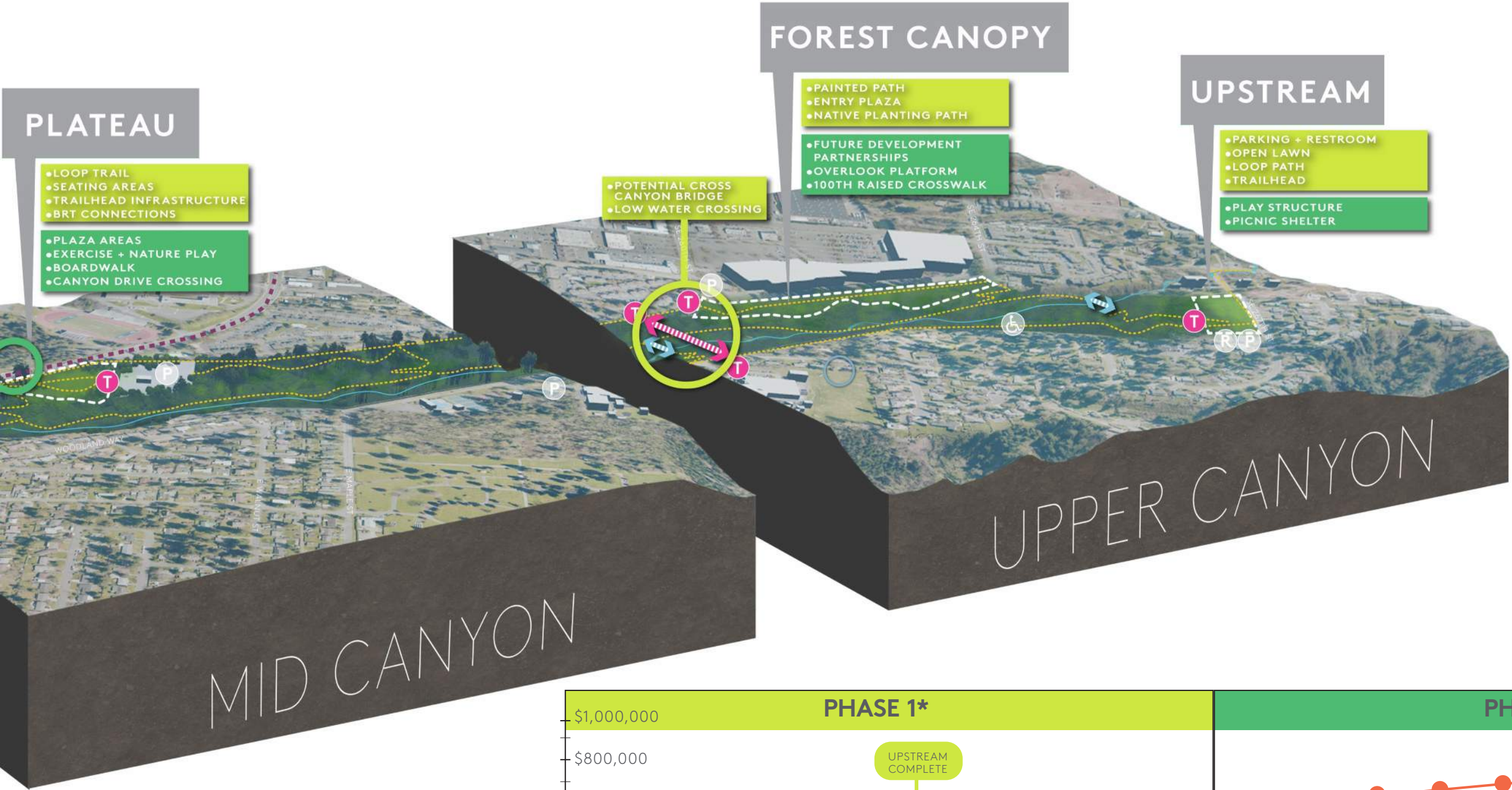
0-10 YEAR PLAN	
Trails and Trailheads	\$5.5M
Earthworks	\$2.4M
Upstream	\$2M
Meadow	\$1M
Plateau	\$2M
Forest Canopy	\$1M
Cross Canyon Bridge	\$2.1M
\$16M CAPITAL INVESTMENT	

10-20 YEAR PLAN	
Upstream	\$5M
Meadow	\$1M
Plateau	\$6M
Forest Canopy	\$4M
Titus Festival Street	\$ TBD
Canyon Drive Overpass	\$ TBD
\$16M+ CAPITAL INVESTMENT	

- PHASE 1 INVESTMENTS
- PHASE 2 INVESTMENTS
- CAPITAL INVESTMENT



*The above numbers are planning level cost estimates and include escalation through January 2024. Estimates for work within the right-of-way requires further engineering.



ASSUMPTIONS: 3.5% ANNUAL ESCALATION
*Phase 1 is prioritized
**Phase 2 in no particular order

Framework Plan—

Introduction

Mill Creek Canyon Earthworks Park Framework Plan is a first step in a long-term reinvestment plan to support the centerpiece of the Kent Park system. This natural resource park is 104.7 acres which includes an important regional riparian corridor for biodiversity, and a landmarked Modernist environmental art installation by Bauhaus-artist Herbert Bayer. The park also includes opportunities to expand nature-based experiences and infrastructure with a coherent trailhead system, trails and walkable connections—all for the enjoyment of residents, workers, school children and visitors who live, learn, work and play in the surrounding neighborhoods such as East Hill and Downtown Kent.

The acquisition of properties contiguous within the park and canyon by Kent Parks, as well as future redevelopment potential around the canyon, prompted this framework plan. It builds on past plans, re-visions the potential of Mill Creek Canyon Earthworks Park, and adapts to current demographic, climate change and equity issues within the community of residents, property owners and cross-city agencies in Kent.

The overall vision of this framework plan is centered on the following goals that are based on an extensive public engagement feedback process, highlighting the priorities for Mill Creek Canyon Earthworks Park.

The following chapters elaborate on these goals by describing the detailed priorities and desires expressed and identified by the public engagement process; providing an in-depth assessment of the park connections, trails, natural resources, equity, and stormwater; describing the elements of the park improvements that will be continuous experiences throughout the focus areas; and will describe the implementation plan for the coming years.



History and Culture

Building on the city jewel of Herbert Bayer’s environmental artwork that also functions as stormwater management infrastructure, this framework plan aims to bring attention, recognition and increased access to this resource within the City of Kent park system. In addition to the land art narrative, stories of water, flora, fauna, and people will be amplified through educational experiences, participation, and discovery throughout the park.



Health and Connections

Currently an underutilized resource, the Mill Creek Canyon Earthworks Park Framework Plan seeks to connect this unique place to the community. This will be achieved regionally and locally through enhanced and welcoming street connectivity, transit connections, wayfinding, events and a continuous walkway along the edges of the canyon and park.



Trail Improvements

Expressed as the highest priority by the participants of the public engagement, trail improvements will stitch the entire park together internally, as well as provide essential connectivity to the surrounding neighborhoods, downtown Kent, and future development that will occur as the City of Kent grows. Varied levels of trail experiences aim to allow visitors to access and experience the significant cultural and natural resources of Mill Creek Canyon Earthworks Park.



Equity

Building on the Parks and Open Space plan that identifies issues of equity within the greater park system, barriers to equitable access to the park and canyon aim to be addressed through transit, pedestrian, and bicycle connections between the surrounding neighborhoods. With a particular focus on eliminating the barrier that is created by Canyon Drive (SR 516), this plan seeks to bridge this impediment by supporting planned transportation improvements, ADA paths servicing all abilities and inclusive wayfinding that reaches outside and inside of the park.



Natural Resources

This park is ultimately geared towards nature experiences prioritized over purely recreational ones, and improvements here aim to focus on connecting people with the natural world in diverse ways. This will be achieved by celebrating the role of Mill Creek Canyon Earthworks Park and blending art and nature in an urban context. A choreography of experiences through land art, a multi-layered meadow, creek and forest will be stitched together by a coherent trail system, allowing varied experiences between visits and throughout the seasons.



Implementation

Creating excitement and momentum by early implementation is one of the goals of this framework plan. First interventions that prioritize access, connectivity and visibility will focus on improvements to Earthworks Park and Upstream Park, creating a draw between the two locations and anchoring Mill Creek Canyon Earthworks Park as an important connector within the City of Kent.



Park-Wide Improvement Strategies

REGIONAL CONNECTIVITY, NEIGHBORHOOD CONNECTIVITY, PARK ACCESS + TRAILS, PARK IMPROVEMENT AMENITIES,
MILL CREEK + STORMWATER, NATURAL RESOURCES.

The Mill Creek Canyon Earthworks Park Framework Plan was prompted in part by the need to respond to a growing and diverse community. By incorporating and improving multiple property acquisitions contiguous with Mill Creek Canyon Earthworks Park this framework plan takes an integrated approach to the holistic park experience that reflects community needs and stitches together rich and varied experiences of the park and canyon. Park-wide improvements are described here in the context of implementing regional and neighborhood connectivity, access and trails, park amenities, amenity-based storm-water solutions, and natural resources. The priority actions developed here are linked to how they reinforce the vision and goals. These park-wide interventions will be woven together with cohesive and recognizable network of trailheads, trails and a wayfinding system leveraging this place's unique aspects, iconic public art and intentional nature experiences.





Priority Items

PRIORITY ITEMS HIGHLIGHT KEY INTERVENTIONS, PARTNERSHIPS AND AREAS FOR STUDY THAT SUPPORT OUR PROJECT GOALS AND JUMP START A HOLISTIC PARK IMPROVEMENT STRATEGY AND IMPLEMENTATION PROCESS.

History + Culture

- Celebration of art-based green stormwater infrastructure strategies to continue the legacy of stormwater innovation started at Earthworks Park.
- Restore the original design intent, increase accessibility, and regenerate cultural programs at Earthworks Park.
- Explore partnership with Greater Kent Historical Society for local history storytelling

Health + Connections

- Establish a destination at both ends of the canyon by developing the Upstream Trailhead/Park
- Improve awareness and visibility of the park and canyon in an early phase with a coordinated series of trailheads that integrate wayfinding, iconic native planting, and public art.
- Develop a technical, multi benefit assessment and potential funding for an upper canyon rim to rim pedestrian bridge
- Develop Upstream Park/trailhead in support of neighborhood connectivity to Downtown Kent, new development and as a destination that brings awareness and anchors the two ends of Mill Creek Canyon Earthworks Park.

Trail Improvements

- South: Connect neighborhoods and park users to the region via the Green River Trail by establishing a trailhead with comfort facilities at the Upstream location and connecting to the trail at 277th, as prioritized in the Parks and Open Space Plan.

- North: Connect neighborhoods and park users to Downtown Kent by increasing the trailheads, pedestrian accessibility through the park and canyon, across Titus Street implementing the planned protected bike facility along Canyon Drive (SR 516).
- In early phases, implement proposed crossings at Canyon Drive identified in the Parks and Open Space Plan, including exploration of multi benefits of and potential for funding for a longer-term overpass pedestrian bridge at Campus Park.
- Develop a wayfinding system that highlights trailhead access and communicates the level of difficulty and range of experiences as an integrated and coherent trailhead wayfinding system. An early phase will create coordinated and engaging trailheads across the canyon.

Equity

- In early phases, implement proposed pedestrian crossings at Canyon Drive identified in the Parks and Open Space Plan, including exploration of multi benefits of and potential for funding for a longer-term overpass pedestrian bridge at Campus Park.
- Strategically modify trails in Earthworks Park to improve ADA access.
- Continue trail restoration and implement paving modifications for the Accessible Meadow Loop

Natural Resources

- Further study/evaluation of water sources that contribute to downstream flooding to find the most effective methods of stormwater management, paired with continued efforts focused on streambank restoration.
- Continue to build the department's natural resource division
- Explore opportunities to collaborate with allied organizations that support watershed health to contribute to salmon and other habitat health downstream.
- Study a multi-benefit strategy for simultaneously addressing invasives management, landslides, and erosion issues paired with other park improvements
- Leverage the excitement expressed by the community to contribute to ecological restoration through work parties, resulting in deeper investment and awareness of Mill Creek Canyon Earthworks Park

Implementation

- Each park planning effort should look beyond the park's boundaries to interdepartmental partnerships to achieve the plan's vision and goals.
- Consider nature play moments along trail improvements or trailheads in early phases to create momentum. Create engaging trailheads in eary phase to create momentum, increase visibility by integrating wayfinding, public art, and iconic native planting to create a visually connected series of place-based experiences.
- Phased implementation of the plan should build upon recent momentum of canyon clean up and trail maintenance. Create cost-efficient public space that allow for enhanced and expanded recreation value in the future

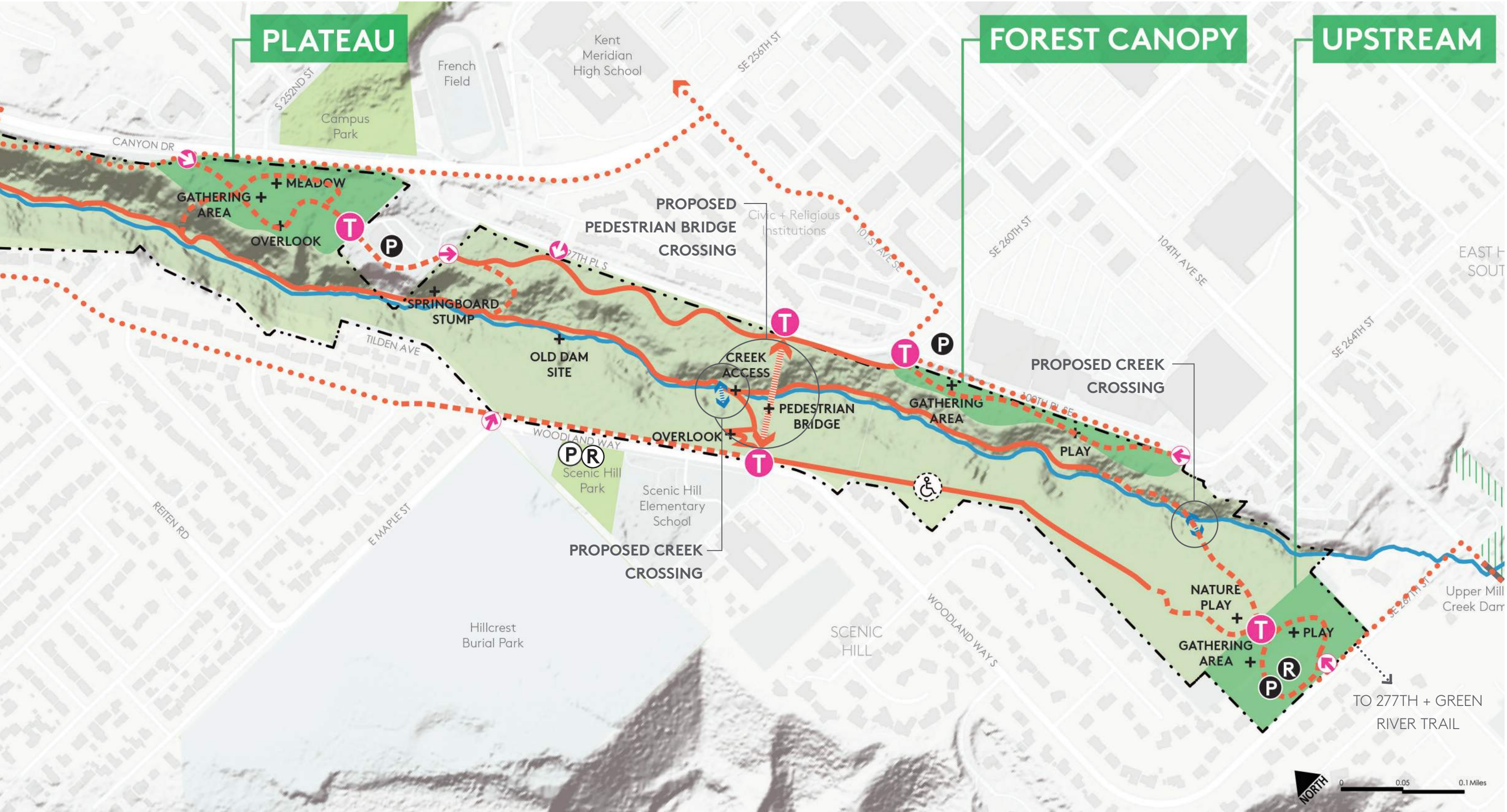


Overview of ten-year park plan investments

70

	NEIGHBORHOOD ACCESS		EXISTING PARKING
	PAVED PATHS		EXISTING RESTROOMS
	EXISTING TRAILS		EXISTING TRAIL ACCESS
	PROPOSED TRAILS		PROPOSED PARKING
	MILL CREEK		PROPOSED RESTROOMS
	ADA PATH		PROPOSED TRAIL ACCESS
	SITE OF INTEREST		PARKLAND
	TRAILHEADS		SITE INVESTMENT AREAS





Regional Connectivity

72

AS THE CITY OF KENT GROWS, ESTABLISH AND AMPLIFY MILL CREEK CANYON EARTHWORKS PARK AS A NATURAL RESOURCE DESTINATION THAT CONNECTS DOWNTOWN, SCHOOLS, AND FUTURE REDEVELOPMENT WITH REGIONAL TRANSIT STATION, DOWNTOWN, REGIONAL PARK SYSTEM, EAST HILL AND BIKE AND PEDESTRIAN NETWORKS.

The response from the public engagement process clearly prioritized the importance of park awareness and recognition, equitable access for all residents of the City of Kent, as well as convenient, enhanced routes to the park from transit, Kent station and a connected trail system. Connecting the park to future bike and pedestrian routes including the 277th corridor trail and the Green River Trail establishes Mill Creek Canyon and Earthworks Parks as a regionally significant destination by linking Kent to surrounding cities and local communities.

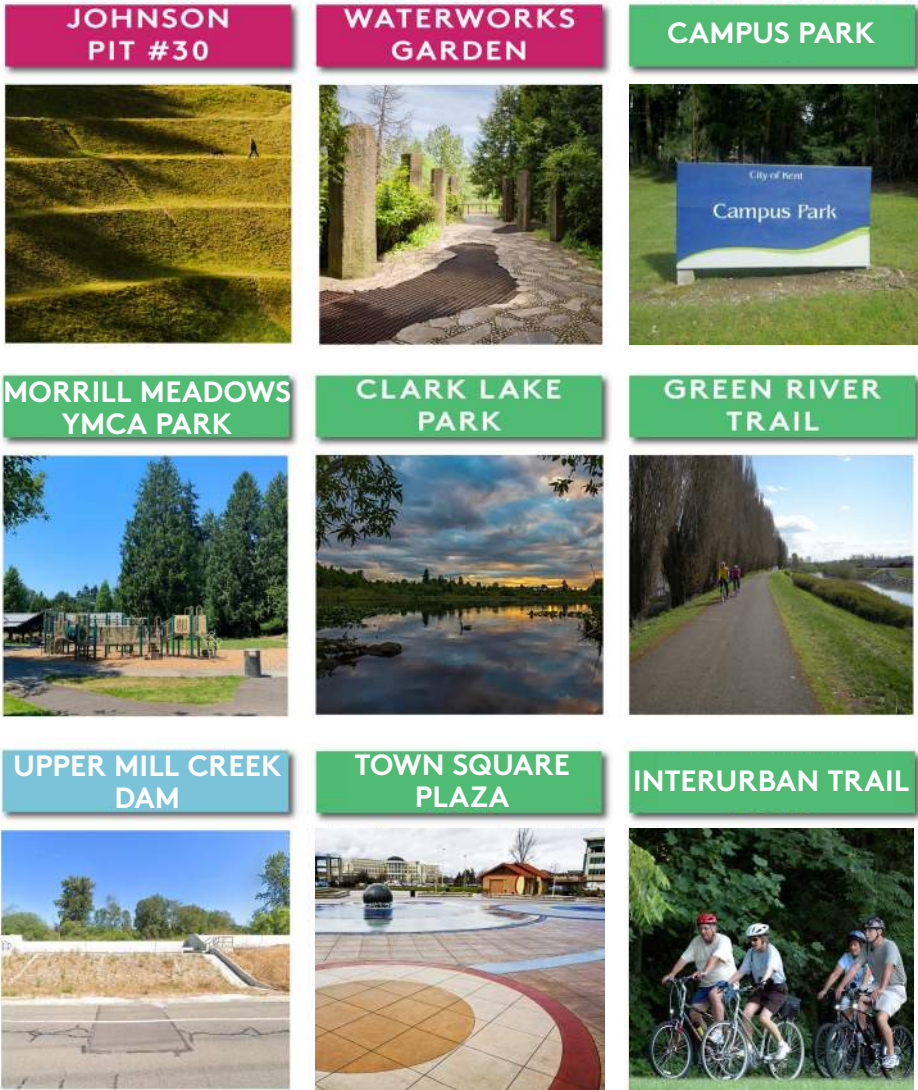
As the City of Kent grows, future development on both ends of the the canyon from Downtown Kent to the former Top Foods site will provide an anchor to each end of the park, activating the walkable edges of the canyon and amplifying this important open space that echoes the layered historic and natural history of the City of Kent.

Already a recognized jewel in the network of significant Land Art Movement sites, the canyon could expand an integrated public art experience. Improving connections to nearby Johnson Pit #30 and Waterworks Garden would continue to increase awareness of these installations as related and significant.

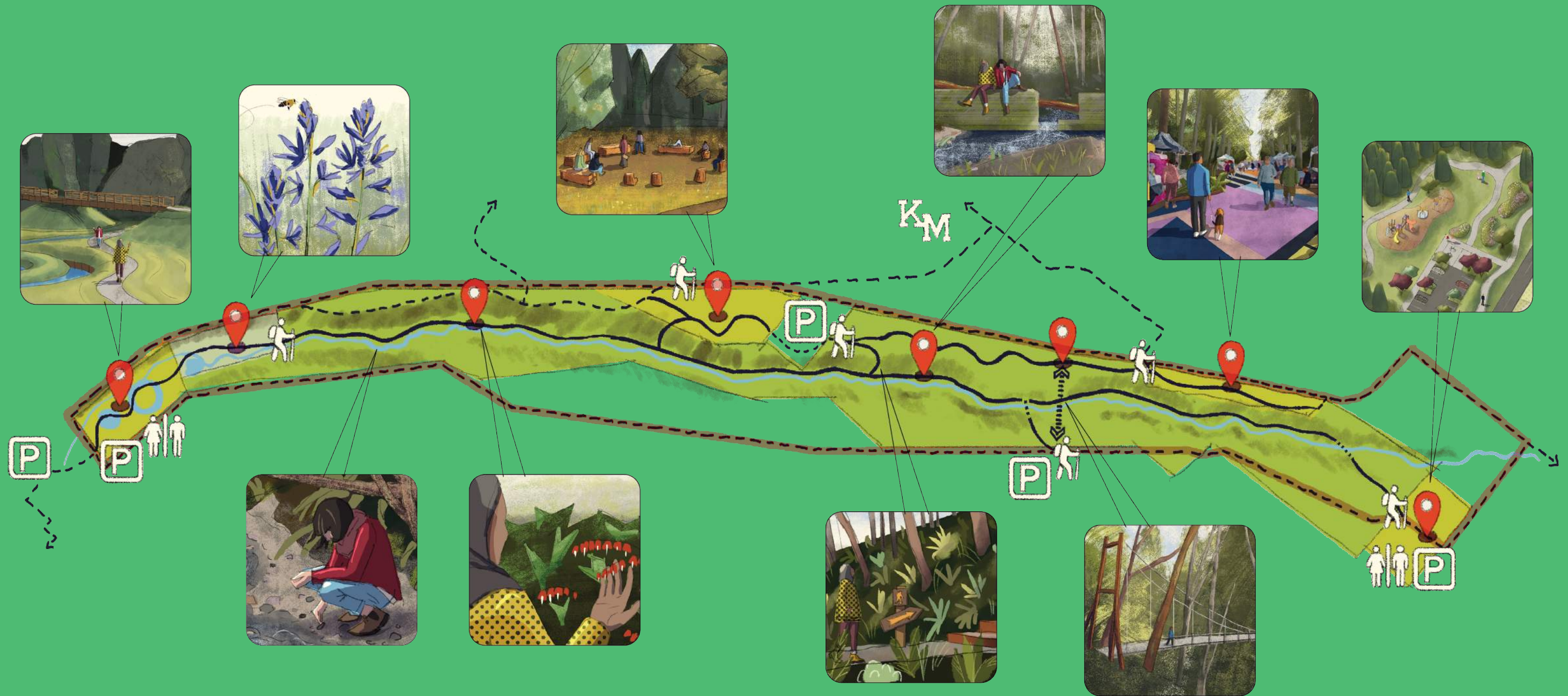
Surrounding parks such as Campus Park, Morrill Meadows, Kent Memorial Park, Town Square Plaza and Clark Lake Parks as well as important regional infrastructure components including nearby Upper Mill Creek Dam provide opportunities for a network of high-quality experiences, recreation, art, and storytelling.

Priority Actions:

1. Each canyon rim park design should look beyond the park's boundaries to interdepartmental partnerships to achieve the plan's vision and goals.
2. South: Connect neighborhoods and park users to the region via the Green River Trail by establishing a trailhead with comfort facilities at the Upstream location and connecting to the trail at 277th, as prioritized in the Parks and Open Space Plan.
3. North: Connect neighborhoods and park users to Downtown Kent by increasing the trailheads, pedestrian accessibility through the park and canyon, across Titus Street implementing the planned protected bike facility along Canyon Drive (SR 516) and sidewalks.
4. Utilize park and trails as a way of connecting people to public transit by offering active first and last mile experiences.



Amplify the canyon as a natural resource destination that connects downtown, schools, and future redevelopment with regional trails, the Kent Park system, and regional land art installations.



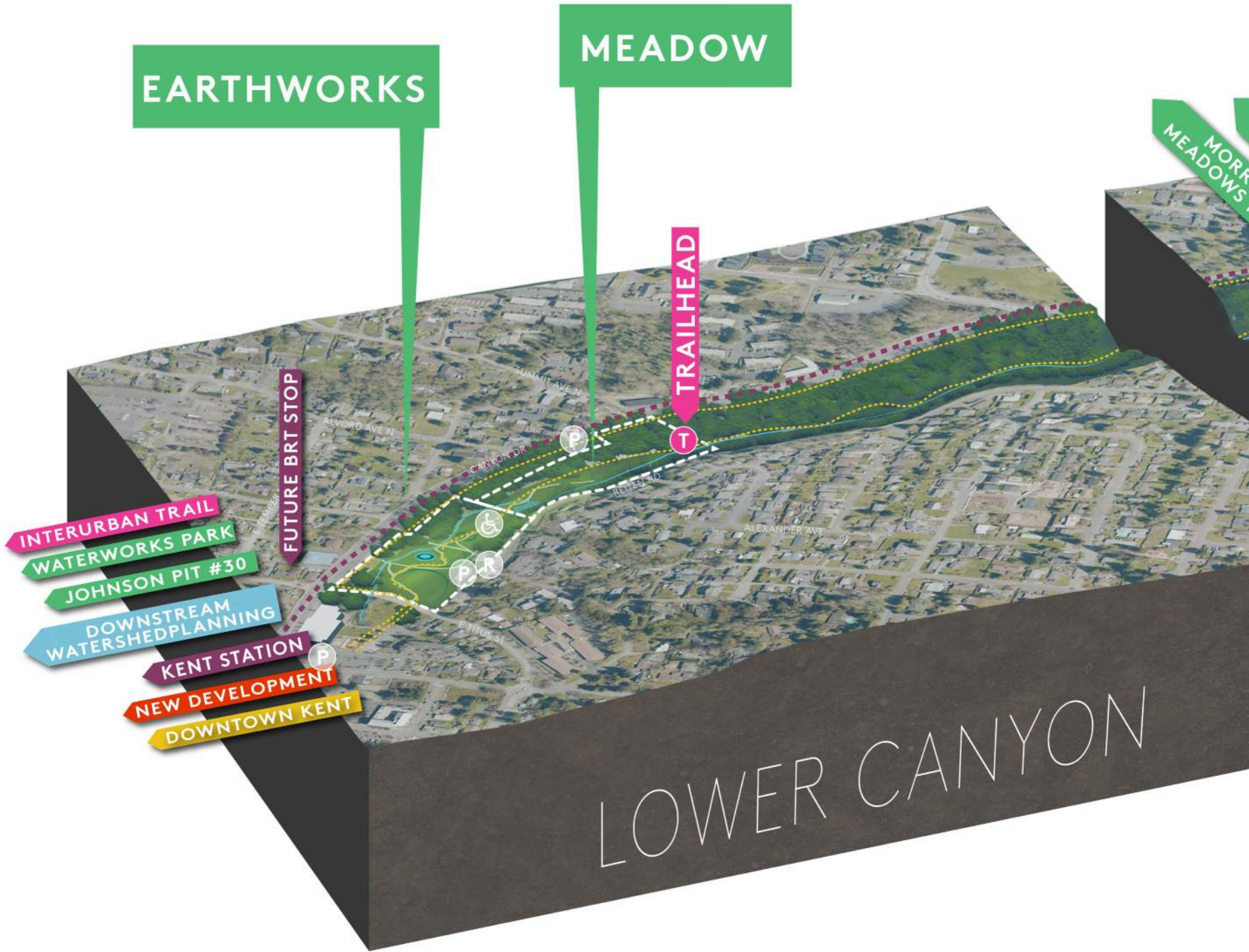
Regional Connectivity

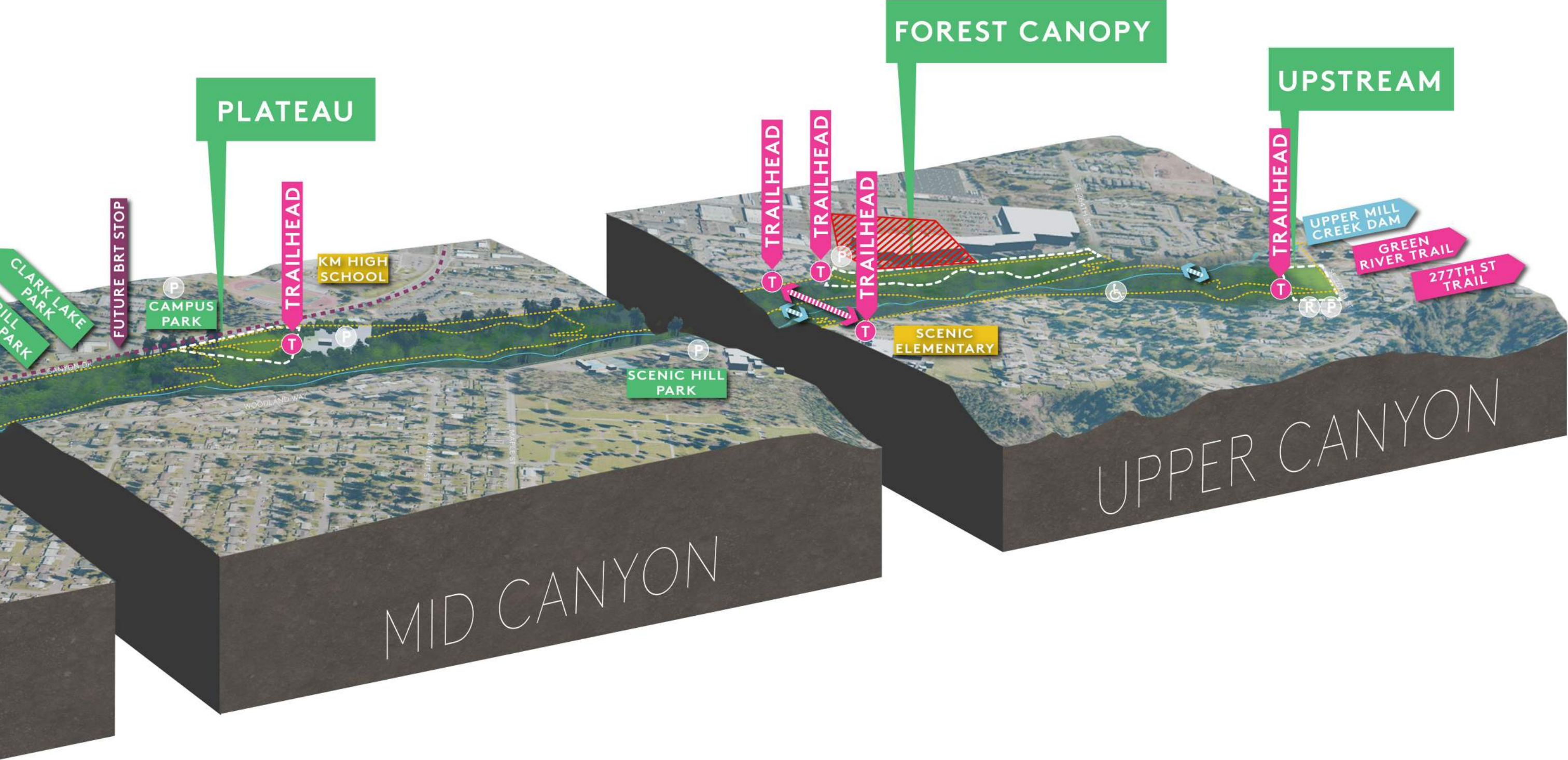
Develop a connected system and regional awareness between regional public spaces, land art, and transportation amenities. Establish Mill Creek Canyon Earthworks as a regionally significant destination and a gateway between downtown Kent and East Hill.

- Establish connections to Mill Creek Canyon Earthworks Park as a regionally significant destination.
- Prioritize access between Kent transit station, future BRT, transit stops and light rail.
- Connect pedestrians and bicyclists to regional routes via 277th, Interurban Trail and Green River Trail that connect to nearby cities.
- Extend trail connection to Kent Memorial Park, local schools, downtown.
- Promote interplay between public space, and future development, retail businesses and reduce local car trips with walkable trails and sidewalks that support future mixed-use opportunities.
- Improve pedestrian access and walkable experiences from downtown Kent.
- Establish awareness of the regional land art network through interpretive signage in and outside of the park.
- Connect the park to existing and future plans for bike and pedestrian infrastructure as a part of the network of Kent Parks and civic uses.

Legend

- TRAIL INFRASTRUCTURE
- TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE
- PARKLAND
- NEIGHBORHOOD AMENITIES
- FUTURE DEVELOPMENT AREA
- WATER INFRASTRUCTURE





Neighborhood Connectivity

INCREASE EQUITABLE ACCESS BETWEEN MILL CREEK CANYON EARTHWORKS PARK AND ADJACENT NEIGHBORHOODS, SPECIFICALLY TO EAST HILL AND CIVIC USES, BY PRIORITIZING WELCOMING, CONTROLLED, PEDESTRIAN/BIKE CENTERED INTERVENTIONS PAIRED WITH INVITING TRAILHEAD, CLEAR WAYFINDING AND INTERPRETATION EXPERIENCES.

Along with the important regional connections to and from the park, the surrounding neighborhoods, civic, and social destinations are prioritized to improve bike and pedestrian access for neighborhoods that have not historically had easy or enhanced access to parks. Currently separated by the high volume of vehicular traffic arterials including Canyon Drive (SR 516), the East Hill neighborhood will be connected to the park by improved existing crosswalks at Titus, Campus Park, Kent Meridian High School, an entry plaza at 101st and an increased number of visible and distinctive trailheads.

Paired with future transit stops, traffic calming, improved crosswalks, and a future pedestrian bridge from Campus Park to Mill Creek Canyon Earthworks Park, these improvements will begin to break down the barriers for equitable park access. Further connectivity would be supported in the context of future redevelopment of the former Top Foods site by considering a cross-canyon suspension bridge that would take pressure off the surrounding bike and pedestrian network, provide more route choices and reconnect the neighborhood edges of the park to each other.

Expanding wayfinding into neighborhood street networks will support welcoming and enhanced connections specifically by developing the 101st St entrance access to connect high school, religious institutions and their communities that are located there with the park and canyon.

An improved trail network, coherent wayfinding, and the redesign of East Titus Street as a festival street for temporary events and improved

access between park and the Downtown area of Kent, including “Meet Me on Meeker.” Combined with a continuous canyon rim route, these improvements will reinforce Mill Creek Canyon Earthworks Park as a significant destination and gateway between Downtown Kent and East Hill.

The Senior Activity Center and adjacent open space across from East Titus Street from the park will be connected by a festival street along the Titus Street frontage to the park, periodically closing to increase capacity and support local celebrations and events.

Finally, throughout the adjacent street network, enhanced connectivity and walkability can be achieved by increased street tree plantings, bike facilities, and protected crossings. A focus on the upper rim walking route and aligning with pedestrian crossings of Canyon Drive into East Hill at Titus, 97th, 101st Place and Campus Parks should be prioritized.

Several projects added to the Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP) in 2022 and 2023 will support these goals of neighborhood connectivity:

- P-85 - Multiple Streets - Construct bicycle facilities to connect Earthworks Park and Downtown (Titus across Senior Center to Kennebeck, Kennebeck from Senior Center to Meeker, Meeker from Kennebeck to Interurban).

The three projects below are being combined into one corridor study that are pending results of a recent grant application. These are obviously important to bike/ped connectivity at rim elevation along Canyon Drive (SR 516)

- P-19 - E Canyon Dr - Construct protected bicycle facilities form Titus St and 97th Pl S.
- P-20 E Canyon Dr/SE 256th St - Construct bicycle facilities and fill sidewalk gaps from 97th Pl S to SE Kent-Kangley Rd
- P-21 - E Canyon Dr/ SE 256th St at 104th Ave SE/SE Kent-Kangley Rd - Intersection Study

Priority Actions:

1. In early phases, implement proposed improvements along Canyon Drive (SR 516) identified in the Parks and Open Space Plan (POSP 2022), including exploration of multi-benefits of and potential for funding for a longer term overpass pedestrian bridge at Campus Park.
2. Develop a technical exploration, multi-benefit assessment and potential funding for an upper canyon rim to rim pedestrian bridge
3. Develop Upstream Park/trailhead in support of neighborhood connectivity to Downtown Kent as a destination that brings awareness and anchors the extents of Mill Creek Canyon Earthworks Park, supporting future redevelopment of the former Top Foods site.
4. Neighborhood connections and more perforations to the canyon, allowing residents to access the park from their house or apartments, especially to multi-family developments.

**Increase equitable access by prioritizing welcoming, enhanced, pedestrian/
bike centered interventions paired with inviting trailhead and interpretation
experiences.**










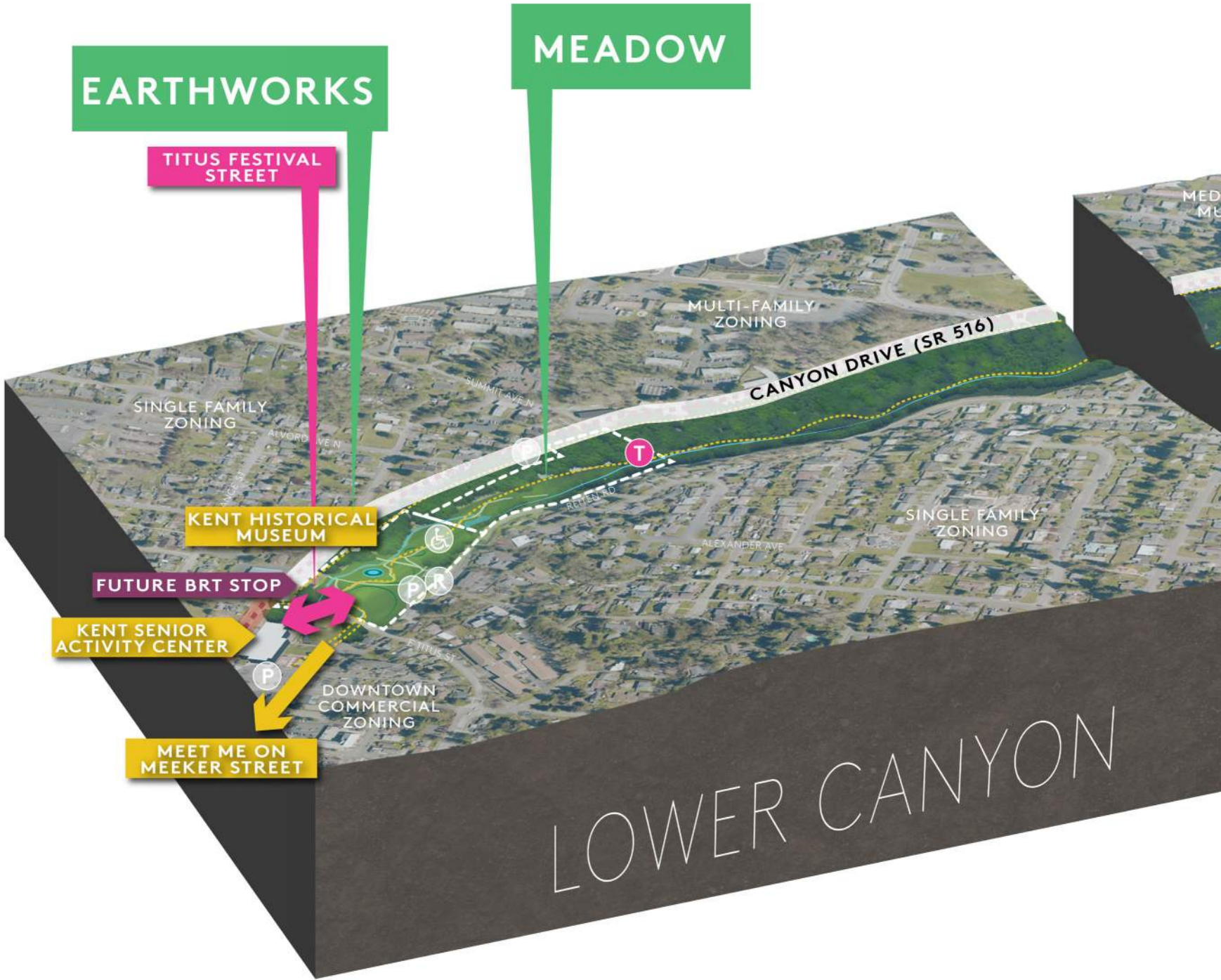
Neighborhood Connectivity

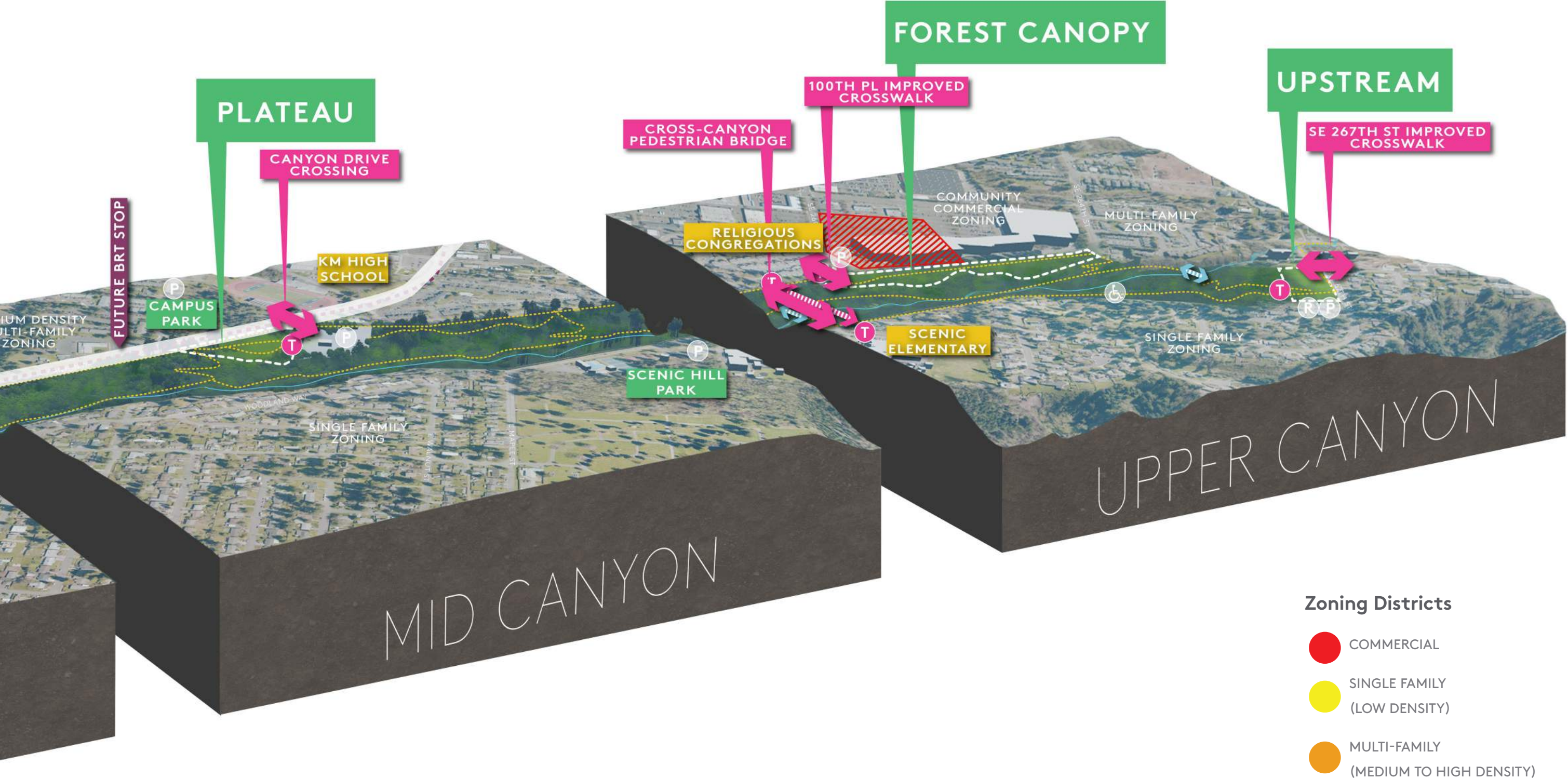
Focus on creating controlled, equitable access opportunities between adjacent neighborhoods and the park and trail network.

- Improve pedestrian access between the canyon and adjacent neighborhoods. Prioritize traffic calming devices along the canyon rim between neighborhood amenities and park entrances and trailheads.
- Improve neighborhood connectivity for a diverse group of park users including improvement to traffic light crossings, raised crosswalk and associated ADA improvements.
- Increase equitable access to the park from East Hill, Campus Park, Senior Activity Center and the middle and high schools with traffic light crossings, improved and protected crosswalks, specifically developing the 100th St entrance access at Forest Canopy to connect high school and civic institutions with the park.
- Build a pedestrian overpass on Canyon Drive (SR 516) to provide enhanced access between East Hill neighborhood and the park.
- Expand navigational and educational wayfinding network for local users from residential neighborhoods and downtown leading to and within MCCEW.
- Increase walkability and connectivity around the canyon with continuous improved sidewalks, street trees, and bicycle facilities.
- Improve E Titus Street as a festival street to support temporary events, activation and easy access to the park.
- Add traffic calming on 97th Street.

Legend

- | | |
|---|--|
|  TRAIL INFRASTRUCTURE |  WATER INFRASTRUCTURE |
|  PARKLAND |  FUTURE DEVELOPMENT AREAS |
|  NEIGHBORHOOD AMENITIES |  HIGHWAY |
|  TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE | |





Park Access + Trails

DEVELOP AND COMMUNICATE AN ACCESSIBLE, INCLUSIVE, VARIED TRAIL NETWORK THAT INCLUDES A RANGE OF EXPERIENCES. ENGAGING TRAILHEADS WILL INCREASE VISIBILITY BY INTEGRATING WAYFINDING, PUBLIC ART, AND ICONIC NATIVE PLANTING TO CREATE A VISUALLY CONNECTED SERIES OF PLACE-BASED EXPERIENCES.

Overwhelming support for an accessible and robust trail network within the park with identifiable trailheads along the canyon edges, was expressed during the public engagement process. To meet that demand, a coordinated network of wayfinding and trail markers will create a cohesive and experiential way to access and use the trail system as well as clear maintenance standards, fully funded Operations & Maintenance (O&M), ongoing capital repair and investment to support a high quality trail experience. From first-time visitors to frequent visitors who want to walk and hike new trails, different choices and experiences will be available for all abilities.

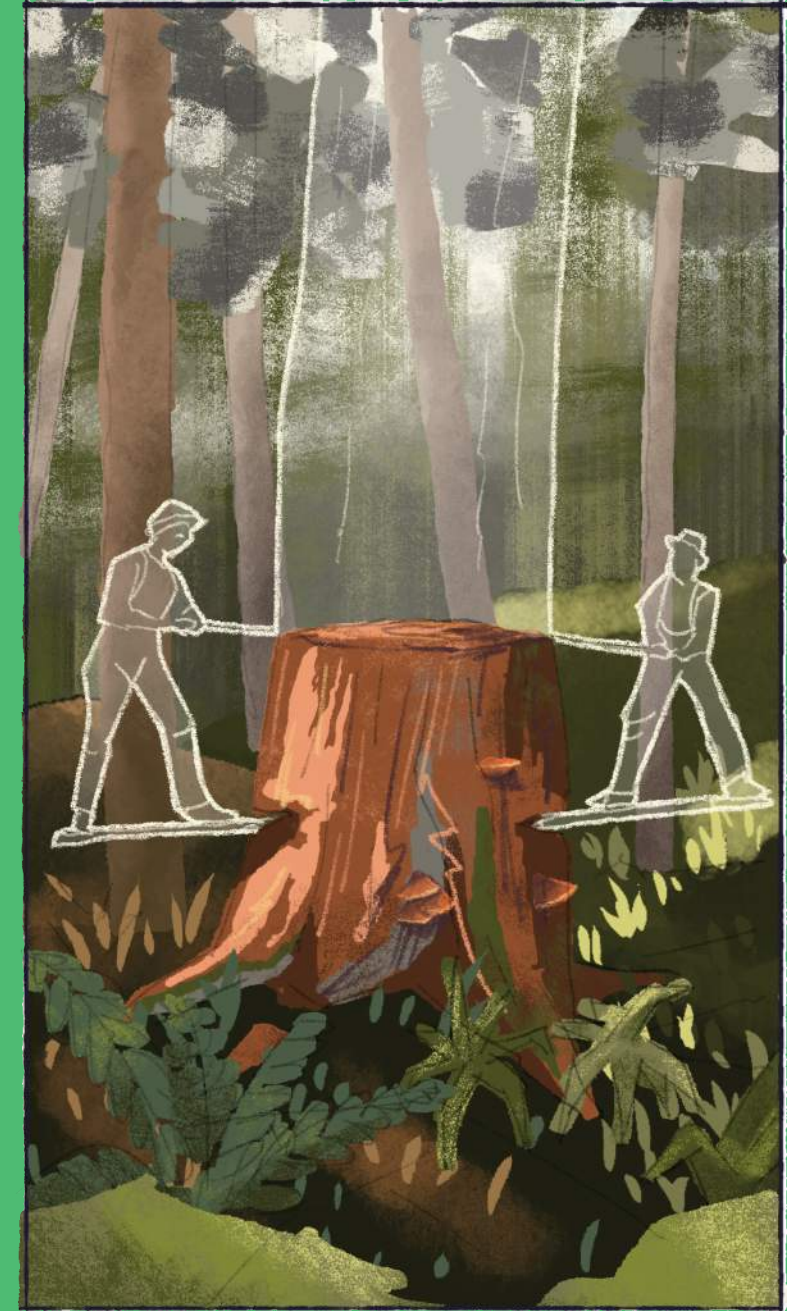
Trail experiences are organized as interconnected loops and range in level of difficulty and experiences - from an immersive nature walk through the lower canyon with low-water creek crossings, to an easy loop trail for families. A cross canyon suspension bridge would allow visitors to experience the tree canopy and view the creek from above.

All abilities access is a key component of the vision for Mill Creek Canyon Earthworks Park. Options for strategic modifications to the Earthworks Park pathways will be explored in partnership with the King County Landmark Historic Commission to find ways to increase use and access while maintaining the original historical design intent.

Priority Actions:

1. Strategically modify trails in Earthworks Park to improve ADA access.
2. Continue trail restoration and implement surface modifications for the Accessible Meadow Loop.
3. Develop a wayfinding system that highlights trailhead access and communicates the level of difficulty and range of experiences as an integrated and coherent trailhead wayfinding system. In an early phase, create engaging trailheads that will increase visibility by integrating wayfinding and public art to create a visually connected series of place-based experiences.
4. Create good publicly accessible information around trails and experiences to help people orient to the trail system and assist with wayfinding and navigation.
5. Trail restoration and maintenance of trail system with natural resources O&M group and partnership with EarthCorps.

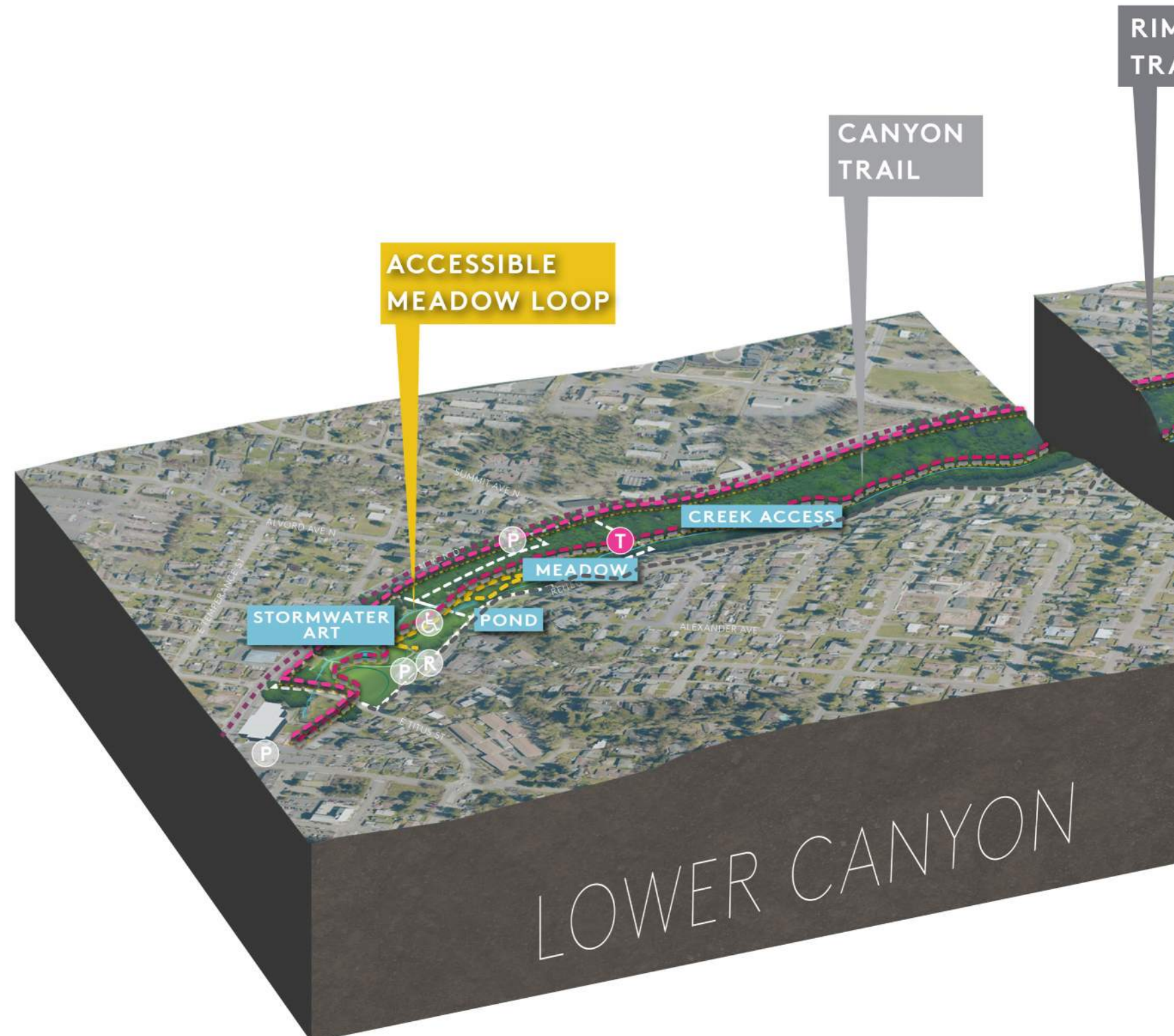
Develop and communicate an accessible, inclusive, varied trail network that includes a range of experiences.



Park Access + Trails

Responding to public feedback, develop a more accessible and robust trail network with identifiable trailheads across the canyon. Wayfinding, seating, trail markers that make a cohesive and easy to use network to first time visitors and frequent visitors who want to take new trails.

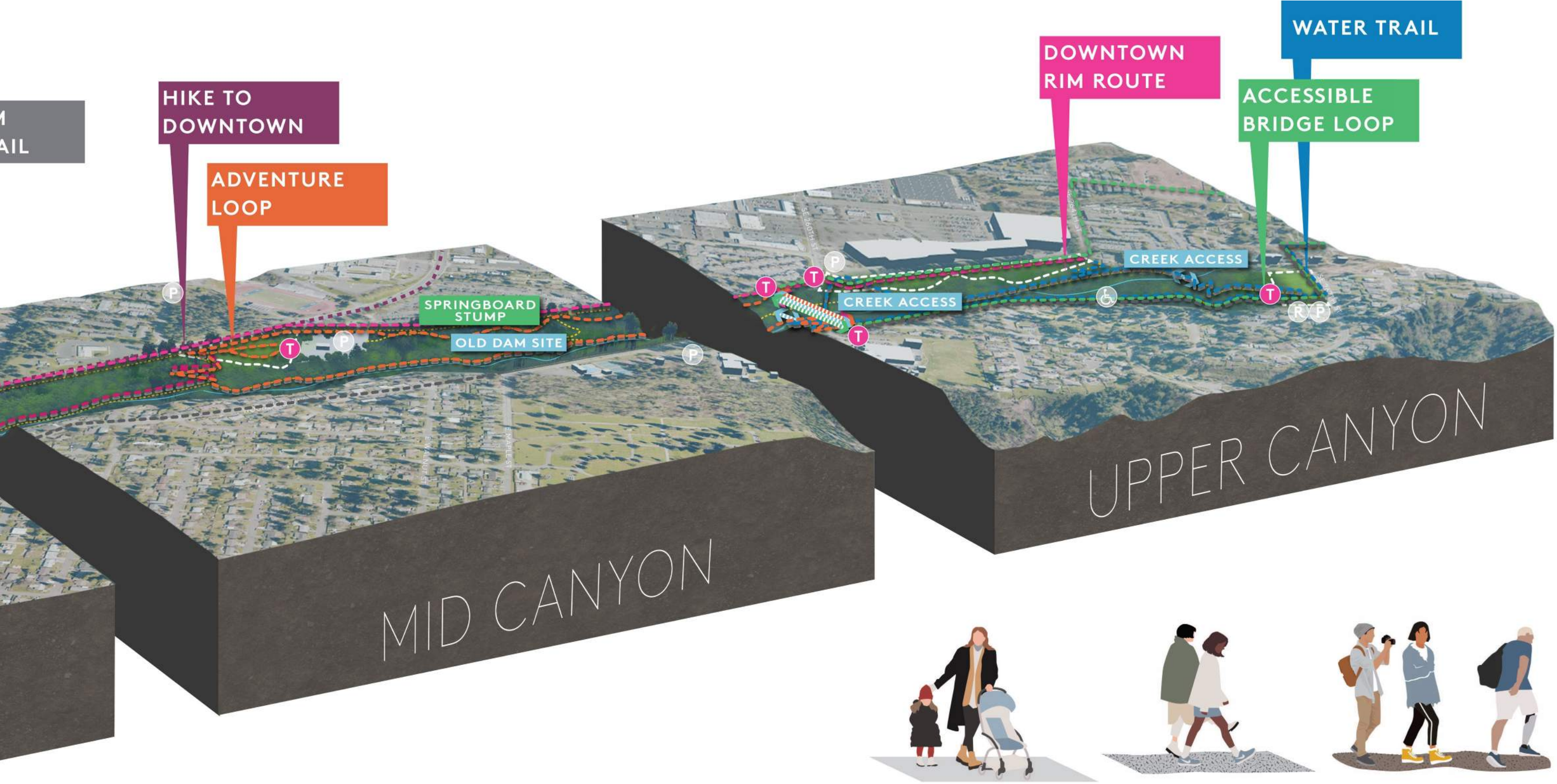
- Provide varied trail choices for abilities, experiences, and connections.
- Increase ADA accessible trail experiences in feasible locations.
- Implement cross canyon bridge to create neighborhood connections, reduce local car trips, support future mixed use redevelopment and create loop trail experiences.
- Integrate public art and planting strategies to affordably increase trailhead visibility and attract more park users.
- Provide strategically placed ADA accessible trails throughout Earthworks Park.
- Develop wayfinding, interpretive signage along the trails to create a cohesive canyon narrative and experience.



Legend

T TRAILHEADS

● WATER INFRASTRUCTURE



Easy Urban Path

- Accessible Meadow Loop**
 - 0.25 miles
 - paved
- Accessible Bridge Loop**
 - 1.5 miles
 - gravel, paved



Park Trail

- Downtown Rim Route**
 - 2 miles one way
 - paved, gravel path
- Water Trail**
 - 2 miles
 - gravel



Hiking Trail

- Adventure Loop**
 - 1.5 miles
 - trail
- Hike to Downtown**
 - 1.5 miles
 - trail

Park Improvement Amenities

IMPLEMENT A COHESIVE YET DIFFERENTIATED SERIES OF PARK SETTINGS FOR A RANGE OF VISITORS FOCUSING ON A DIVERSE SERIES OF PARK AMENITIES THAT PROVIDE VISITORS WITH CONSISTENCY AND CHOICES.

Across the range of improvement areas including Earthworks, Meadow, Plateau, Forest Canopy, and Upstream, a suite of park improvements will be implemented that are unique to each site through expression of views, topography, vegetation, and access to parking, restrooms, play areas, seating, trails and information. At the same time, a coordinated set of amenities provide opportunities for a new experience every time visitors come to the park through the seasons of the year, weather patterns, events, and area of the park that is visited.

With a focus on nature experiences and play, each improvement area provides choices for understanding and connection with the aspects of the canyon and watershed. These amenities range from passive to active, interactive to contemplative, and educational to social by including creek access, a meadow, native plant education, understanding of stormwater expressions.

More active uses include structured play areas, gathering areas, outdoor education spaces, and areas for community events. Park wide improvements such as wayfinding signage, public art, native planting, green stormwater infrastructure, lighting, seating, and a surfaced trail network create an experiential and aesthetic connection between the various places within the park.

Priority Actions:

- 1. Celebrate original design intent, increase accessibility and regenerate cultural programs at Earthworks Park.
- 2. Establish a destination at both ends of the canyon by developing the Upstream Trailhead/Park.
- 3. Improve awareness and visibility of the park and canyon in an early phase with a coordinated series of trailheads that integrate wayfinding, iconic native planting, and public art.

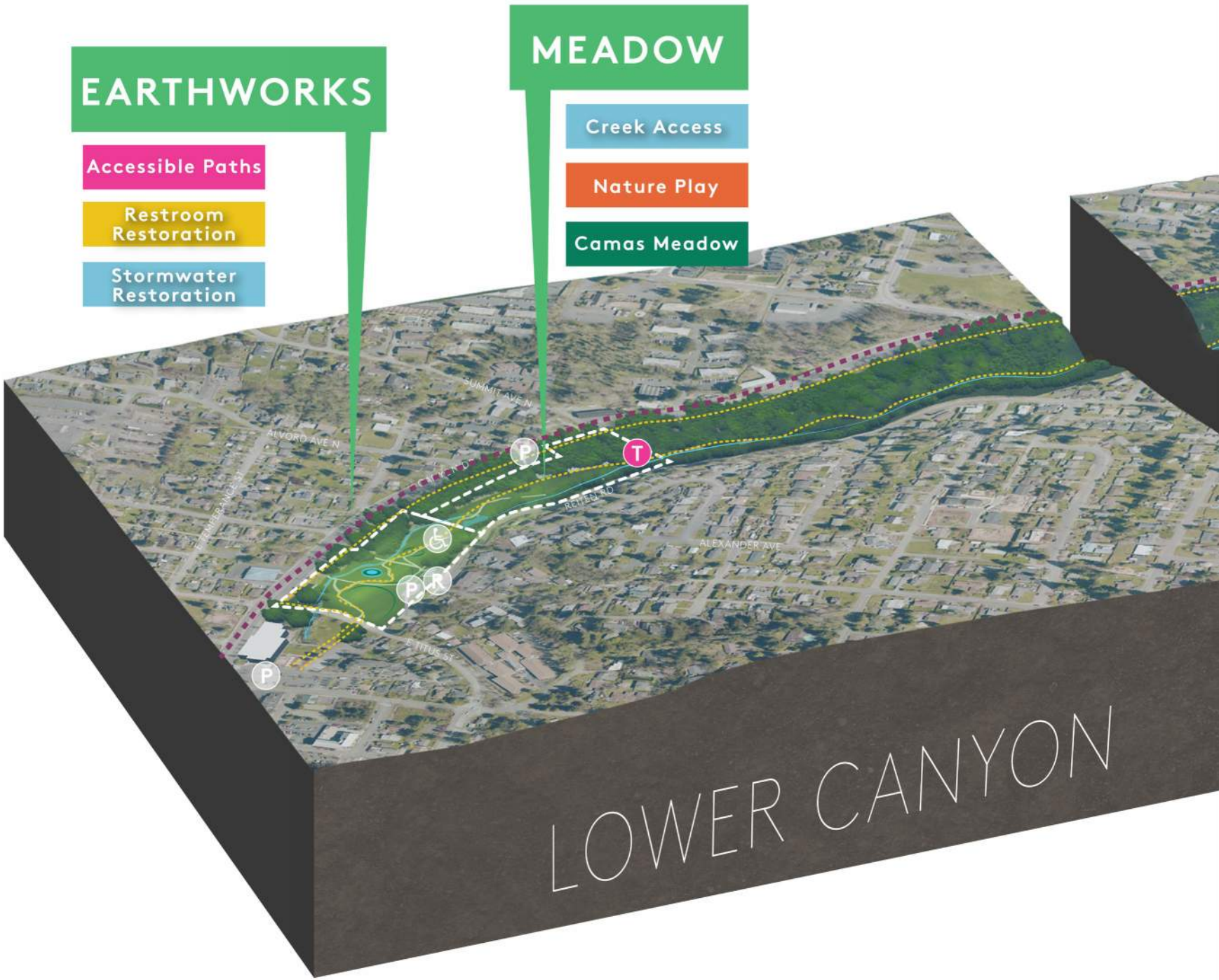
Implement a cohesive yet differentiated series of park amenities for a range of park visitor experiences.

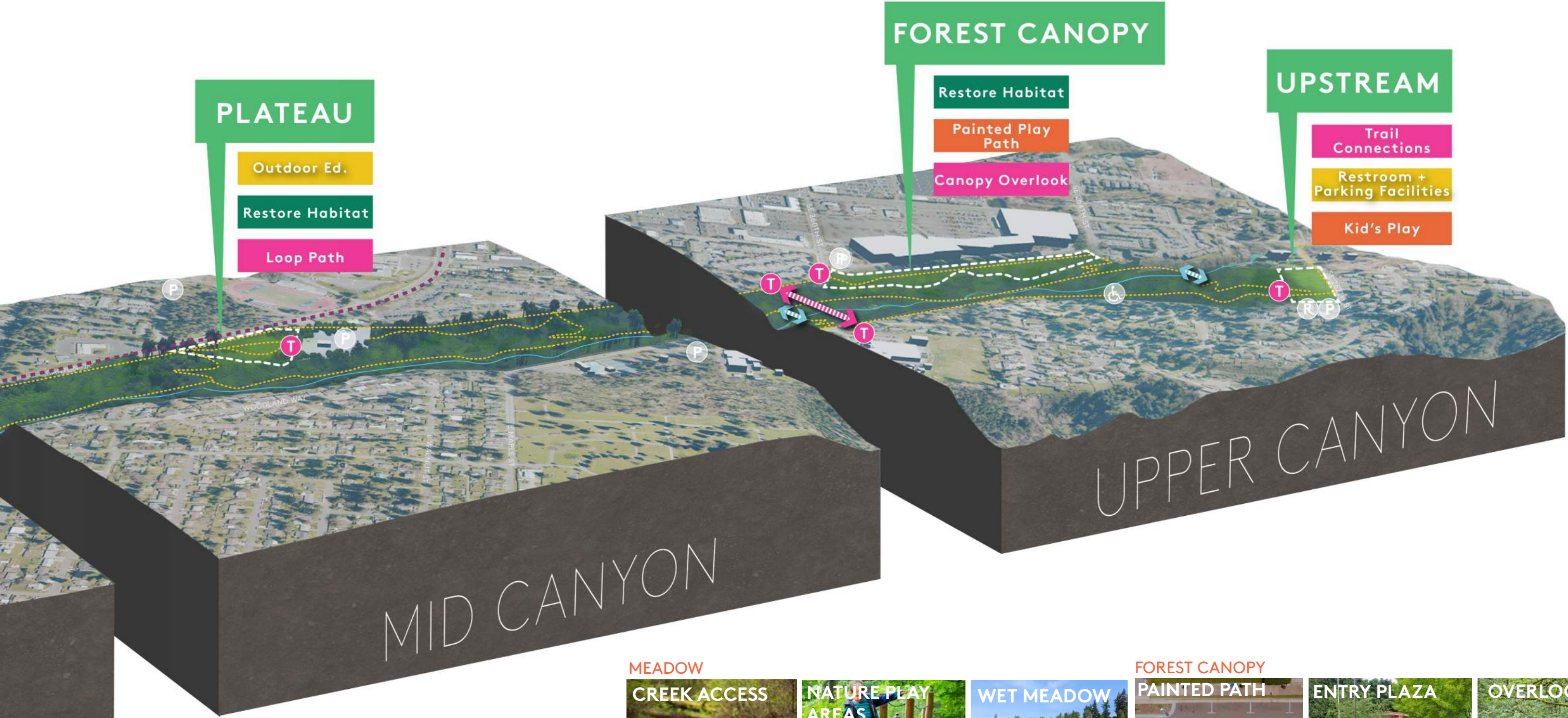


Park Improvement Amenities

Develop a range of park improvement amenities across the entire canyon park and trail network.

- Incorporate public needs, desires, and feedback to develop a phased plan for proposed site amenities at each improvement area.
- Implement improvements that reinforce the natural resource role of the park and are unique to each location within the park and canyon area.
- Support awareness of the park and canyon extents by providing recognizable amenities as part of a series including lighting, seating, surface materials.





MEADOW



FOREST CANOPY



PLATEAU



UPSTREAM



Mill Creek + Stormwater

PROMOTE AND SUPPORT LAND AND WATERSHED STEWARDSHIP PRACTICES BY IMPLEMENTING STORMWATER MANAGEMENT, RESTORATION, EDUCATION, AND INTERPRETATION THAT ELEVATES GREEN STORMWATER INFRASTRUCTURE AND LOW IMPACT DEVELOPMENT THROUGHOUT THE PARK AND CANYON.

Mill Creek Canyon Earthworks Park provides a uniquely positioned opportunity to elevate watershed stewardship and stormwater expression and management education. Featuring the first land art combined with stormwater management installation of its kind, paired with a natural creek in an urban condition, the strategies for elevating and educating visitors through various methods are many. The varied strategies implemented throughout the trailheads and canyon should address the challenge of unknown water sources that contribute to downstream flooding, while also avoiding large topographic gestures to allow the Herbert Bayer’s work to stand on its own and not attempt duplication. That said, stormwater art interventions throughout the park will continue the legacy of multi-benefit, amenity based green stormwater infrastructure.

Expanding the stormwater storage throughout the park and canyon will help manage the increased frequency and intensity of storms anticipated for the region. In addition, the city is studying stormwater patterns and intensities in relation to the surrounding development, and closely monitors the flows and water levels upstream and within the park.

Partnering with tribes early in the process will be important to establish

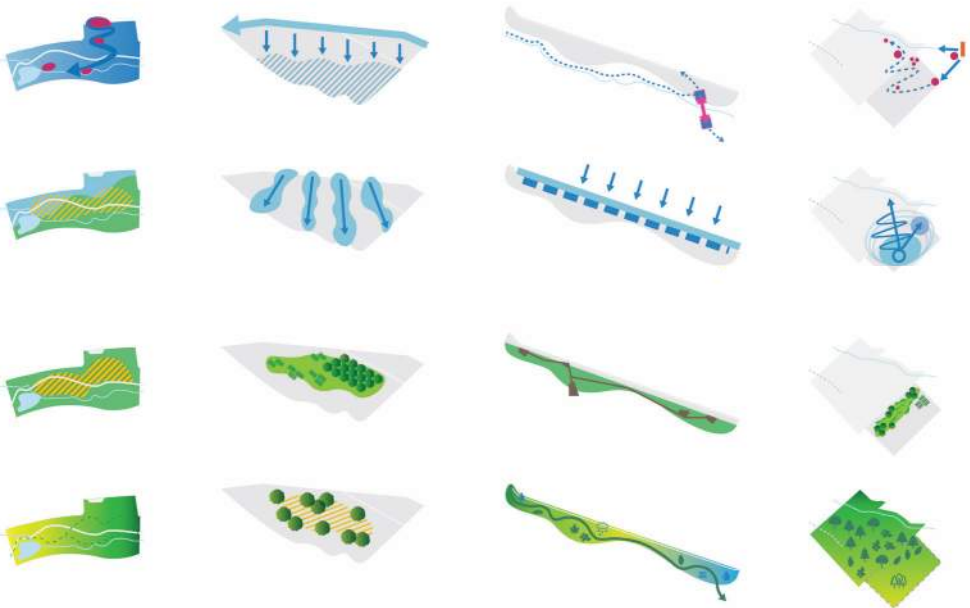
Indigenous Land Stewardship reciprocity. Amplifying the intersection between the natural and constructed with interventions such as stormwater art that can be paired with ecological restoration efforts, Indigenous Land Stewardship through Traditional Ecological Knowledge, and green stormwater interventions to reduce peak flows. Each focus area will be considered as a potential site to treat stormwater in educational, ecological, and engaging ways.

Priority Actions:

- 1. Elevate effective art-based green stormwater infrastructure strategies to continue the legacy of stormwater innovation at Earthworks Park.
- 2. Further study/evaluation of water sources that contribute to downstream flooding to find the most efficacious methods of stormwater management, paired with continued efforts focused on streambank restoration.
- 3. Explore opportunities to collaborate with allied organizations that support overall watershed health with the goal of contributing to the health of salmon and other habitat downstream.

Water Planning

There are many strategies that can be implemented to capture, treat, and design around water in the canyon. These are a few preliminary strategies for developing a habitat, stormwater, and water plan for the park sites Meadow, Plateau, Forest Canopy and Upstream.

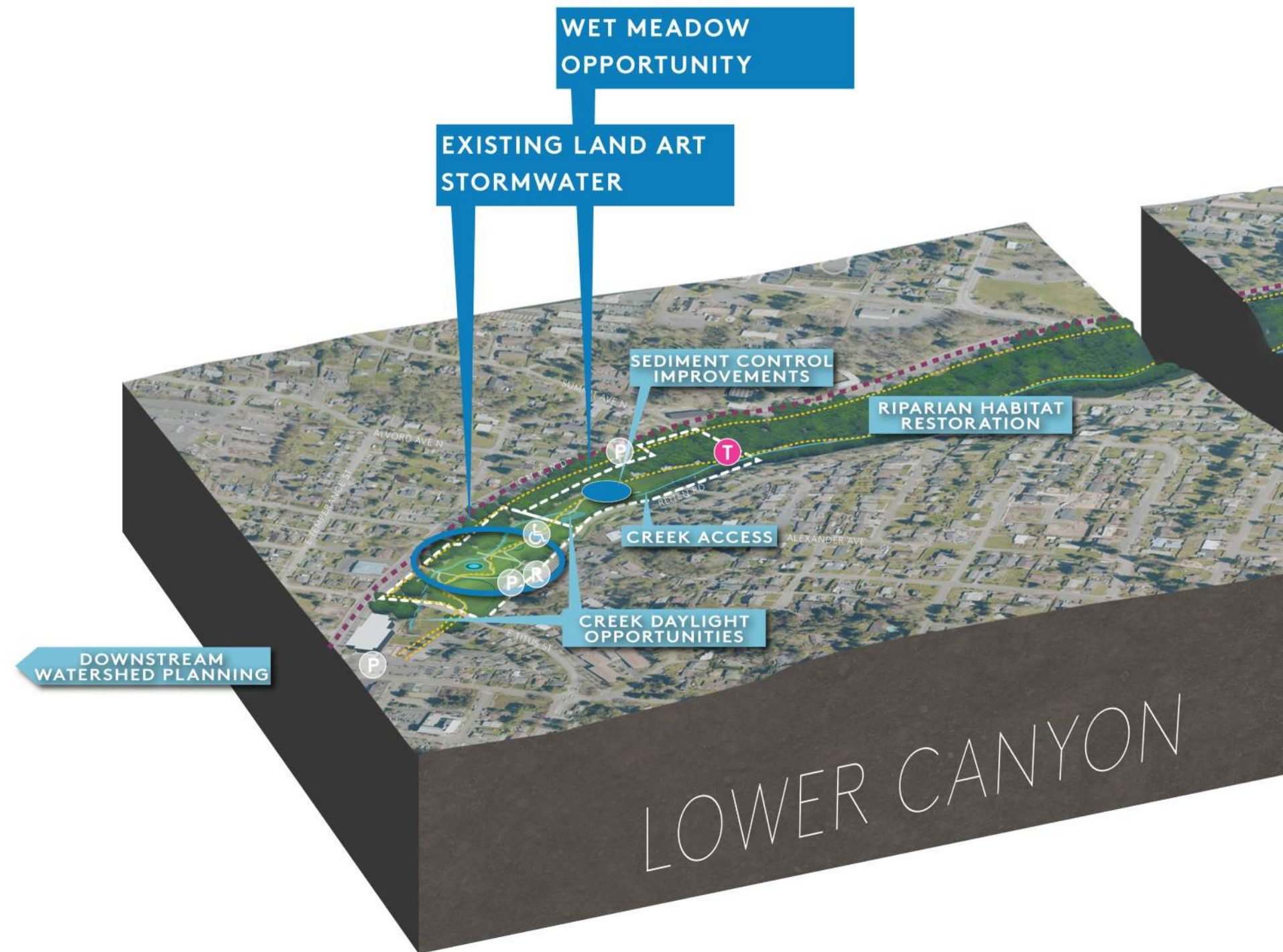


Support land and watershed stewardship practices by expanding stormwater management, restoration, education, and interpretation.



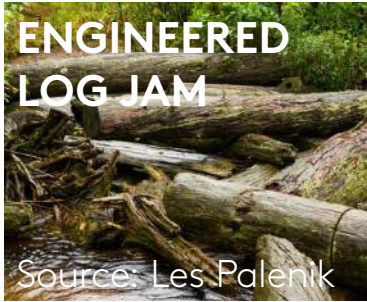
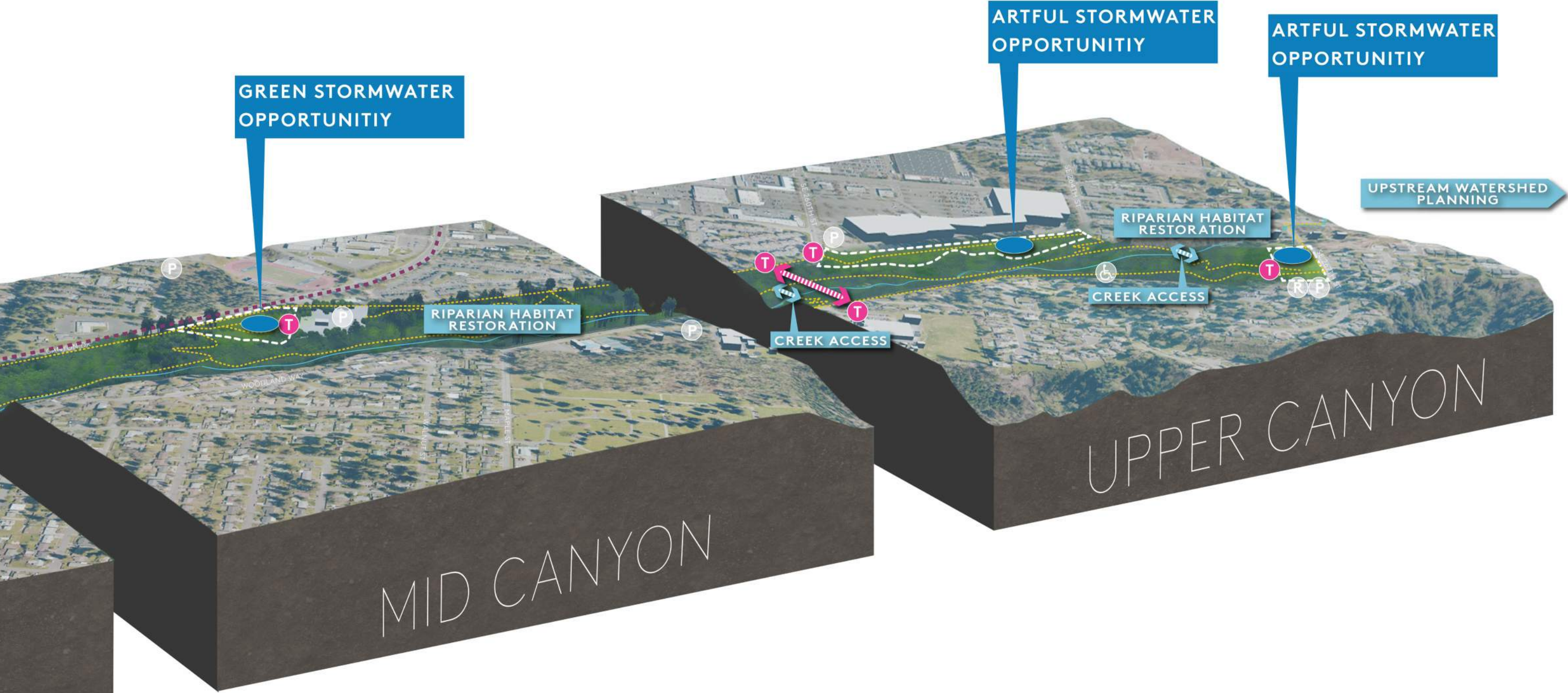
Elevate green stormwater infrastructure throughout the park and canyon.

- Support the health of Mill Creek through bank stabilization, log jam sediment traps and stormwater collection and treatment throughout the canyon. Use stormwater collection on each improvement site to treat stormwater in an ecological and engaging way.
- Work with allied organizations to provide water quality monitoring that can be combined with citizen science and school programs.
- Manage bank stabilization through ecological restoration and trail maintenance, integrating upstream and downstream riparian corridor improvements such as sedimentation control and invasives removal to achieve multiple benefits.
- Slow peak flows at new park development locations through amenity based green stormwater infrastructure.
- Promote improved stormwater treatment and water quality with stormwater runoff monitoring and output filters.



Legend

- SITE IMPROVEMENT OPPORTUNITIES
- WATER INFRASTRUCTURE



Natural Resources

92

PROVIDE A WIDE ARRAY OF NATURE EXPERIENCES ROOTED IN THE CHARACTERISTICS OF EACH UNIQUE AREA OF MILL CREEK CANYON EARTHWORKS PARK. DEVELOP AN ICONIC NATIVE PLANTING PLAN THAT RESPONDS TO THE ECOLOGICAL CONDITIONS OF EACH AREA OF THE CANYON, WHILE IDENTIFYING TRAILHEADS AND SITE IMPROVEMENT AREAS THROUGH COHESIVE PLANTING DESIGN. SUPPORT NATIVE FLORA AND FAUNA THROUGH RESTORATION AND MAINTENANCE WITHIN THE CANYON.

Diverse natural experiences are a community priority. A strong preference for ecological restoration parties provides opportunities for social, ecological and park investment benefits. A hierarchy of trail experiences, overlooks and viewpoints, and nature play all support a potent nature connection. Strategic native plantings will provide interpretive, educational, and experiential opportunities. By combining iconic native planting with public art and wayfinding the trailhead experience is elevated, increasing visibility, contributing to the variety of experiences, and providing incentive to return and visit the park seasonally. Work with Natural Resource Management team to support these goals.

Priority Actions:

1. Study a multi-benefit strategy for simultaneously addressing invasives management, landslides, and erosion issues paired with other park improvements.
2. Leverage the excitement expressed by the community to contribute to ecological restoration through work parties, resulting in deeper investment and awareness of Mill Creek Canyon Earthworks Park.
3. Consider nature play moments along trail improvements or trailheads in early phases as well as opportunities for nature based programming and education.
4. Integrate Natural Resource Management team into canyon improvement plans.

MEADOW



PLATEAU



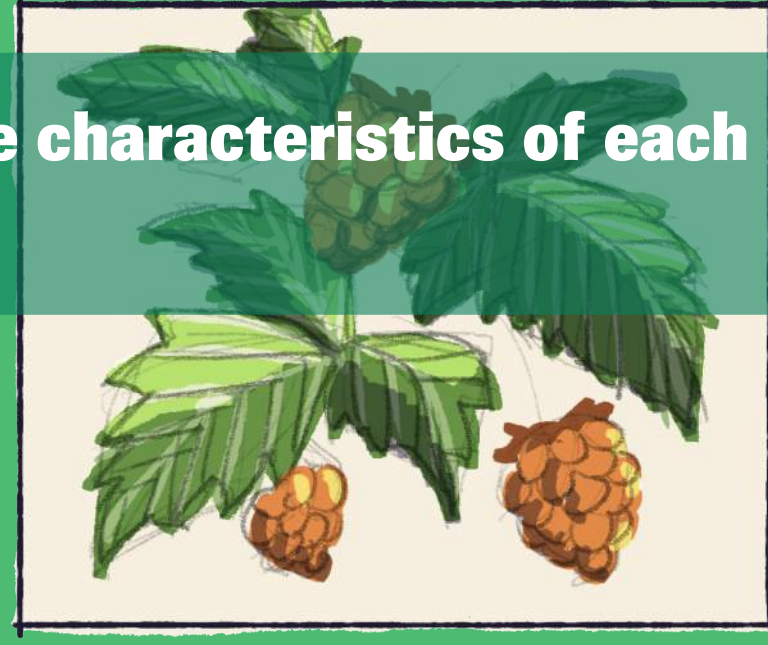
FOREST CANOPY



UPSTREAM



Provide a wide array of nature experiences rooted in the characteristics of each unique area of Mill Creek Canyon Earthworks Park.



Natural Resources

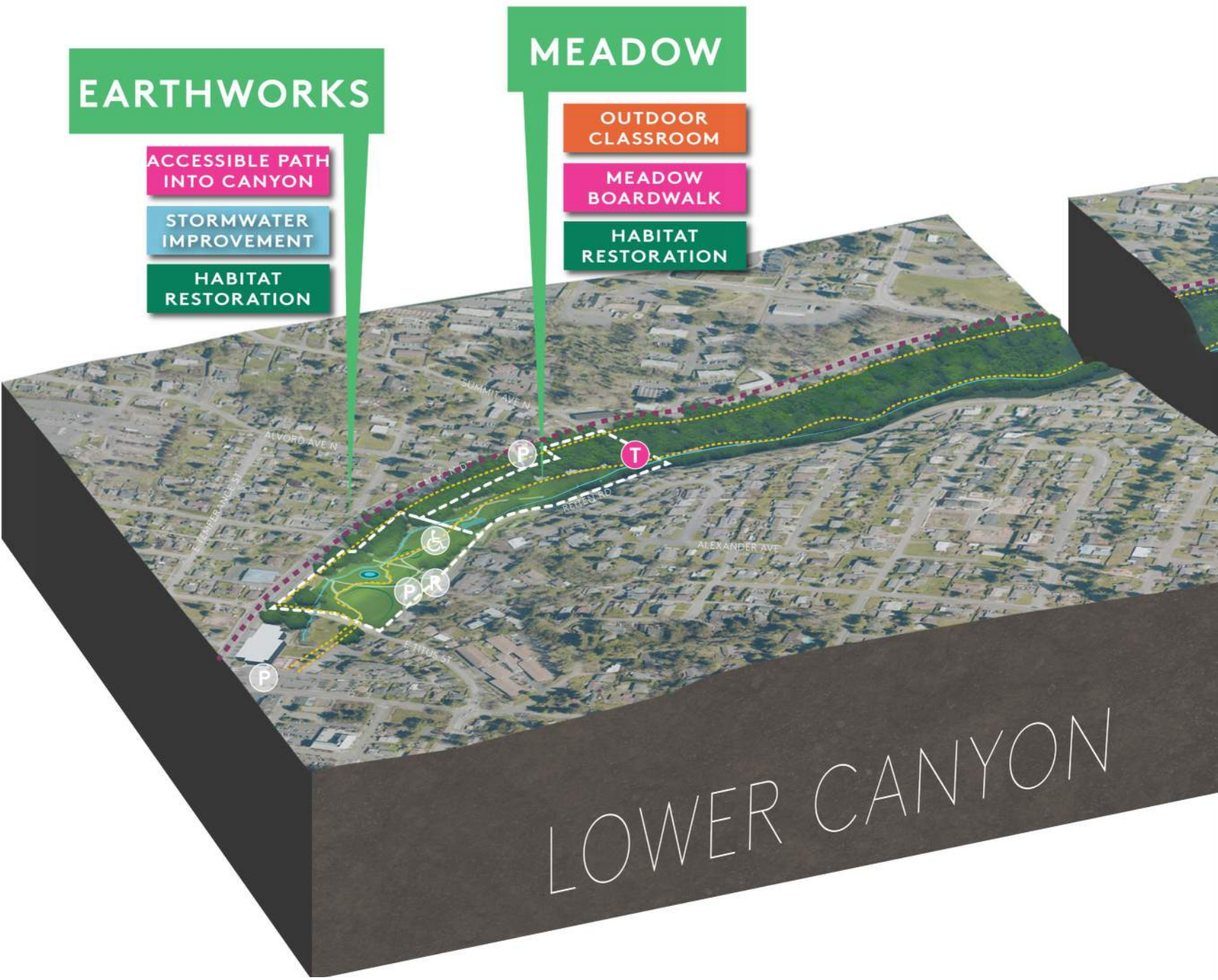
Highlight, restore and steward the range of habitat areas across the canyon to support a healthy and diverse ecosystem while engaging park visitors.

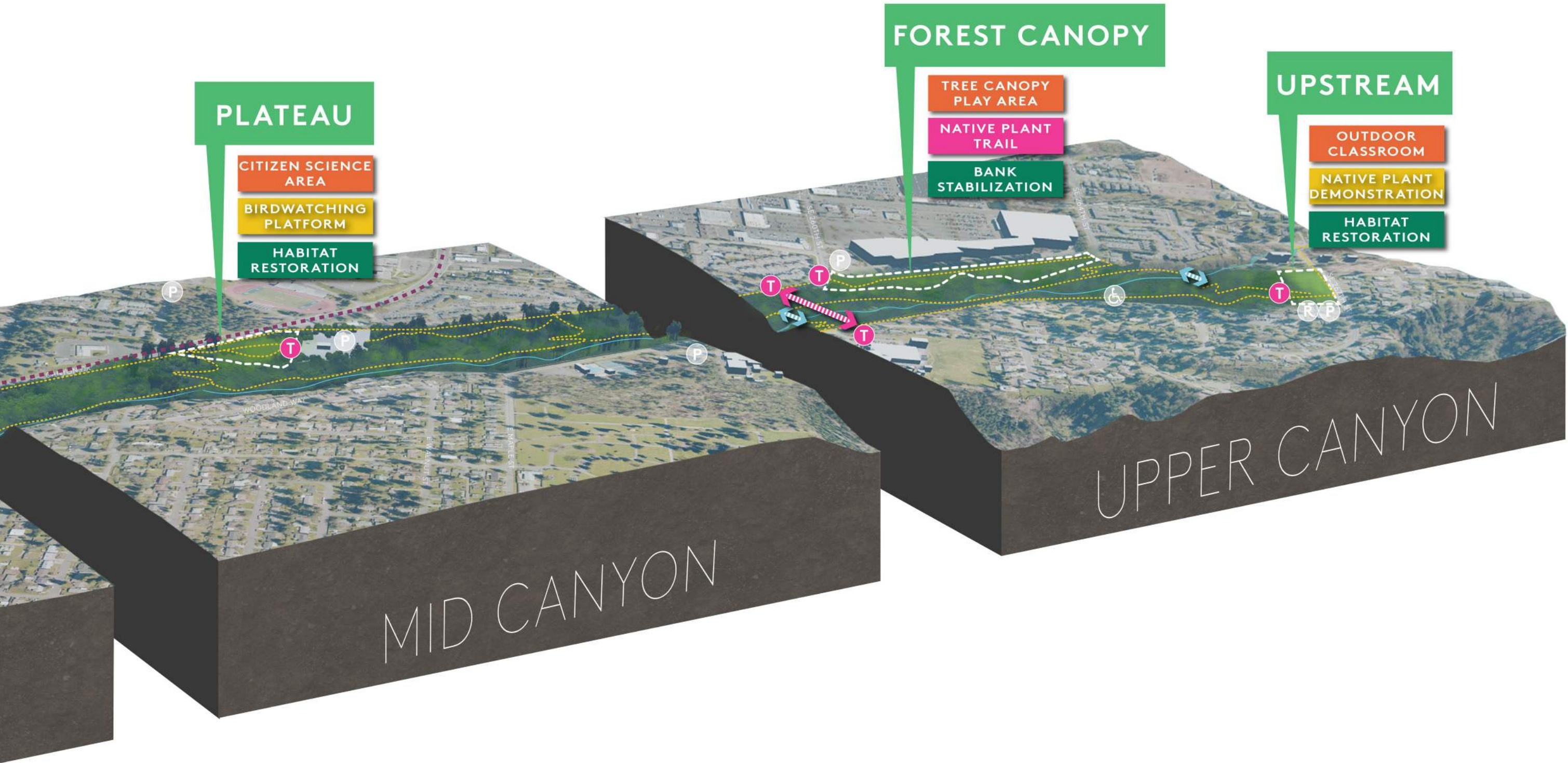
94

- Restoration work parties connect people as stewards to the park and canyon and each other.
- Connect people to mental and physical health benefits of being in nature.
- Citizen science and education opportunities for local organizations.
- Opportunities to partner with tribes and local organizations
- Protect the biodiversity of an important riparian corridor, identified by Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife.
- Develop iconic and identifiable native planting plan by park focus area and provide supporting interpretive material.
- Work with Kent's Natural Resource Management team to oversee Operations & Maintenance for implementation of plan.

Legend

- TRAIL INFRASTRUCTURE
- HABITAT RESTORATION
- FACILITIES + PROGRAM
- PLAY
- WATER INFRASTRUCTURE





Site Improvements

PHYSICAL PROGRAMMING DIAGRAMS FOR FIVE PRIORITY PARK DEVELOPMENT AREAS AND OVERALL TRAIL NETWORK.

Physical Park Improvement Areas

This section identifies the physical program and extents for each of the five park improvement areas and the overall trail network. These include Earthworks Park, Meadow, Plateau, Forest Canopy, and Upstream. For the purpose of this framework plan, the physical program is defined as an improvement element such as a nature play area, a picnic shelter, bridges, stormwater elements, parking, or a gathering area and so on. The following concepts for each improvement area illustrate physical program uses that reflect the context of the park and canyon as a natural resource serving the residents of Kent and reflecting the priorities identified by the community engagement process.

Trails

The overall trail network was developed based on strong desire from the community surveys and engagement response for an improved trail network that promotes connectivity. Multiple options for trail experiences throughout the canyon, canyon rim, and neighborhood street network will encourage park users of all ages and abilities to use the trails and access the multi-layered experiences of the park, ideally without getting in a car. An important improvement to the trail network to promote equitable access is the addition of a cross canyon bridge that would improve pedestrian access to trails, local schools, between neighborhoods, and future mixed-use development.

Physical Improvements

Many of the physical program elements noted in this framework plan are common to all five improvement areas and are intended to reinforce the innovative history of Herbert Bayer’s Earthworks Park as a pioneering green infrastructure project. These throughlines would be expressed throughout the canyon and would visually connect each discrete experience to create greater awareness of the whole and respond to the unique condition of each place. These common program elements include the following:

- Green stormwater management
- Native plantings
- Varied trail and path types
- Nature play and outdoor education
- Public art

The purpose of these physical program diagrams is to:

- Support the on-going conversation with the public about how these spaces are best used;
- Ensure activities are distributed in context with other uses in the overall park system and across the park and canyon and adjacent uses;
- Understand the cost of building these improvements to be incorporated into future funding efforts;
- Catalyze park improvements with a phasing approach that includes opportunities for the community to see early investments that garner support and excitement for future phases.
- Study accessibility across the canyon and at the specific improvement sites.



SUSPENSION
BRIDGE

Trail Network

Trailheads, Crossings and Trail Types.

The proposed trail network consists of a range of experiences to accommodate a wide range of park users. The trails have a range of surface types, distinguishable trailheads, and opportunities for canyon crossings from rim to rim or lower crossings across the creek.

Trail Surface types include:

- Combination of sidewalks, streets, gravel paths and canyon trails
- Legibility through wayfinding and public art.

Trailheads provide a range of amenities:

- Trailheads combined with bold use of native plantings. Kiosks with maps and interpretive signs, benches, trash cans, bike rack.

Crossings focus on upper and lower crossing connections:

- Seasonal low creek crossings and high canyon bridge crossings.
- Three canyon rim crossings were studied. Geotechnical engineer provided high level assessment of potential viability and options were discussed with custom bridge builder. A preferred rim to rim bridge location between Woodland Way and 98th Place South was determined based on the stability of the land around the proposed bridge location, access to bridge from the road, parking and established trails; the high use of the elementary school trailhead; and future redevelopment potential of the former Top Foods site.

2.5 MILES OF NEW TRAILS!!

Legend

- ACCESSIBLE MEADOW LOOP
- DOWNTOWN HIKE TRAIL
- ADVENTURE LOOP
- DOWNTOWN RIM ROUTE
- WATER TRAIL
- ACCESSIBLE BRIDGE LOOP
- FAMILY RIM TRAIL
- • • • RIM AND CANYON TRAIL

- P** EXISTING PARKING LOT + RESTROOM
- R** PROPOSED PARKING PARTNERSHIP
- R** PROPOSED RESTROOM
- O** SITE OF INTEREST
- T** TRAILHEADS
- T** TRAILHEADS
- T** TRAILHEADS
- T** TRAILHEADS



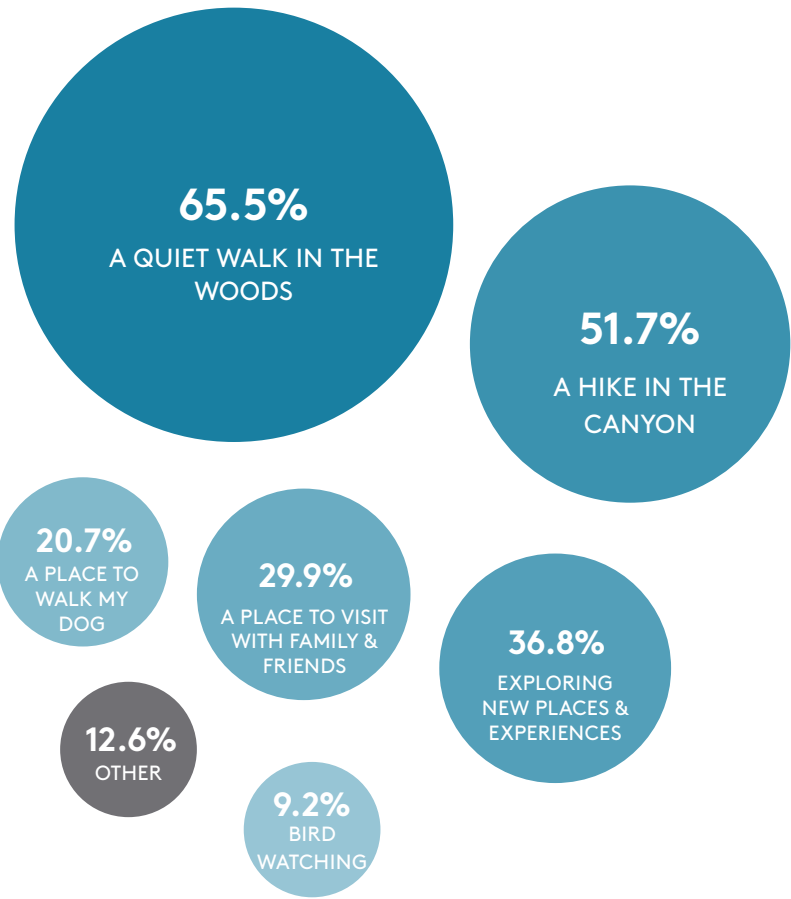


Trail Typologies

Diverse trail experiences to expand recreational opportunities.

Diversifying the trail experiences within the park will provide varied lengths, difficulty levels, types of environments and points of interest. Wayfinding that shares this information in multiple languages will support the expansion of these recreational opportunities.

During public outreach conducted in Fall 2022, online survey respondents shared what attracts them to Mill Creek Canyon Earthworks Park:



Q: WHAT ATTRACTS YOU TO THIS PLACE?



Easy Urban Path

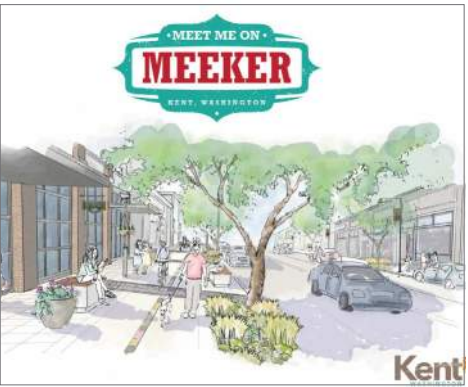
Sidewalks surrounding the canyon with paved surfaces, minimal elevation gain and short mileage.

Accessible Meadow Loop

- 0.25 miles
- paved

Accessible Bridge Loop

- 1.5 miles
- gravel, paved





Park Trail

Trails along the top of the canyon and park and accessible loop trails with gravel or sidewalk surface and low to medium elevation gain.

Downtown Rim Route

- 2 miles one way
- paved, gravel path

Water Trail

- 2 miles
- gravel



Hiking Trail

Trails into and through the canyon with uneven packed earth surfaces, higher elevation gain and at times trail obstacles to navigate.

Adventure Loop

- 1.5 miles
- packed earth

Hike to Downtown

- 1.5 miles
- packed earth



Proposed Trail: Downtown Hike

DISTANCE: 1 MI (ONE WAY) 2 MI (ROUND TRIP)

SURFACE: PACKED EARTH, SIDEWALK

SCENIC SPOTS: MILL CREEK, MEADOW, EARTHWORKS, MEET ME ON MEEKER

FACILITIES: PARKING AT AMERICAN LEGION

TRAIL CONNECTIONS: ADVENTURE LOOP, MEADOW LOOP



Proposed Trail: Rim to Downtown

DISTANCE: 1.75 MI (ONE-WAY) 3.5 (ROUND TRIP)

SURFACE: PAVED, GRAVEL PATH

SCENIC SPOTS: CANYON RIM, FOREST CANOPY, PLATEAU, MEADOW

FACILITIES: PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION ALONG CANYON DRIVE

TRAIL CONNECTIONS: CANYON TRAIL, PEDESTRIAN BRIDGE, EARTHWORKS, SENIOR CENTER



Proposed Trail: Adventure Loop

DISTANCE: 1.4 MI

SURFACE: PACKED EARTH

SCENIC SPOTS: MILL CREEK, SPRINGBOARD STUMPS, OLD DAM SITE, CANYON VIEWS

FACILITIES: PARKING AT SCENIC HILL PARK

TRAIL CONNECTIONS: CANYON TRAIL, RIM TRAIL (SCENIC HILL ADA PATH)



Proposed Trail: Accessible Meadow Loop

DISTANCE: .3 MI

SURFACE: PAVED

SCENIC SPOTS: EARTHWORKS PARK, POND OVERLOOK, MEADOW, CANYON

FACILITIES: PARKING, RESTROOM, SEATING

TRAIL CONNECTIONS: CANYON TRAIL, DOWNTOWN CONNECTION



104

Proposed Trail: Water Trail

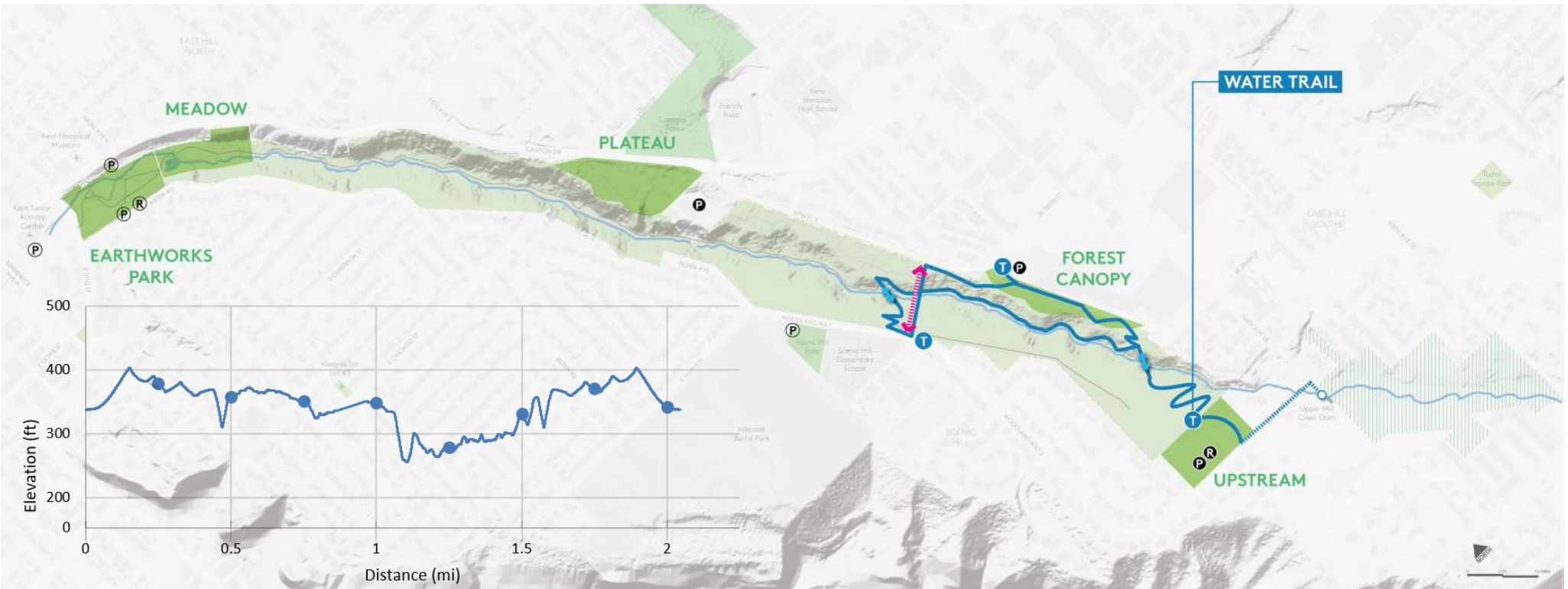
DISTANCE: 2 MI

SURFACE: PACKED EARTH, GRAVEL

SCENIC SPOTS: MILL CREEK, CANYON RIM, DAM, UPSTREAM

FACILITIES: PARKING AND RESTROOMS AT UPSTREAM

TRAIL CONNECTIONS: CANYON TRAIL, RIM TRAIL



Proposed Trail: Accessible Bridge Loop

DISTANCE: 1.4MI

SURFACE: GRAVEL, PAVED

SCENIC SPOTS: PEDESTRIAN BRIDGE, CANYON VISTA, FOREST CANOPY, DAM

FACILITIES: PARKING AND RESTROOMS AT UPSTREAM

TRAIL CONNECTIONS: RIM TRAIL



Proposed Trail: Canyon Trail

DISTANCE: 2 MI (ONE-WAY) 4 MI (OUT-AND-BACK)

SURFACE: PACKED EARTH

SCENIC SPOTS: MILL CREEK, CANYON RIM, DAM, UPSTREAM

FACILITIES: PARKING AND RESTROOMS AT UPSTREAM AND EARTHWORKS

TRAIL CONNECTIONS: ALL TRAILS



Proposed Trail: Rim Trail

DISTANCE: 4 MI LOOP

SURFACE: GRAVEL, PAVED

SCENIC SPOTS: CANYON CROSSING VIEW, UPSTREAM

FACILITIES: PARKING AND RESTROOMS AT UPSTREAM AND EARTHWORKS

TRAIL CONNECTIONS: ALL TRAILS



Proposed Park Improvements: Earthworks Park

Concept: Restore and regenerate Earthworks Park using the aligned principles that established the park and are still valid today; access, recreation, and natural resources.

Existing Conditions: Earthworks Park is an important example of Bauhaus design, expressing both form and function through the landforms and stormwater management. The park was established as a King County historic landmark in 2008.

Size: 5.75 acres

Physical Program: Primary updates to Earthworks Park proposed in the framework plan include:

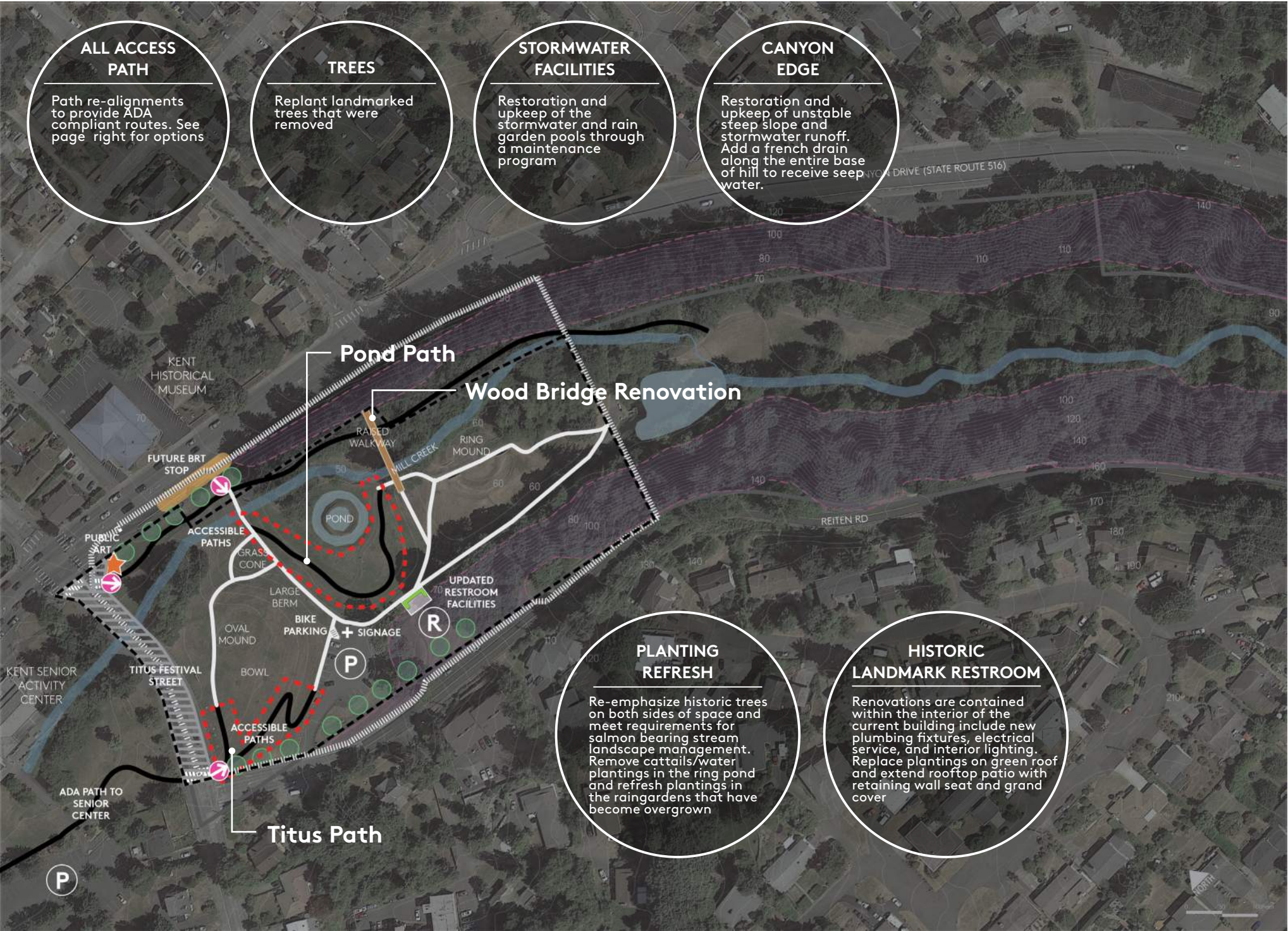
- Accessible path network, connected to future Bus Rapid Transit stop along East Smith Street.
- Accessible path from E Titus to parking/restroom.
- “Festival Street” at E Titus to support temporary events
- Restoration of historic landscape to the greatest extent allowed to protect water quality.
- Interior restroom improvements.
- Improve function of water movement through the park
- Focus on landscape improvements across the park including irrigation, turf and tree care.
- Wood bridge renovation.
- Rooftop planter vegetation to refresh and feature native plantings found in other areas of the park and furnishings.

Recreation and Cultural Opportunities: Concerts, dance performances, temporal art installations, could all occur in the north facing bowl along E Titus Street. As a festival street, E Titus could be periodically closed to traffic for special events to allow for improved and easy gathering space and to connect to the open space adjacent to the nearby Senior Activity Center.

Legend

- SITE BOUNDARY
- ||||| LANDMARK BOUNDARY
- PROPOSED ACCESSIBLE PATH ALIGNMENT
- EXISTING PATHWAY
- PATH REALIGNMENT AREA

- (R) EXISTING RESTROOM
- (P) EXISTING PARKING
- ORIGINAL DESIGN
- REPLACEMENT TREES
- ➔ EXISTING ENTRANCE



Pond Path Option 1

Less impact to the bowl topography



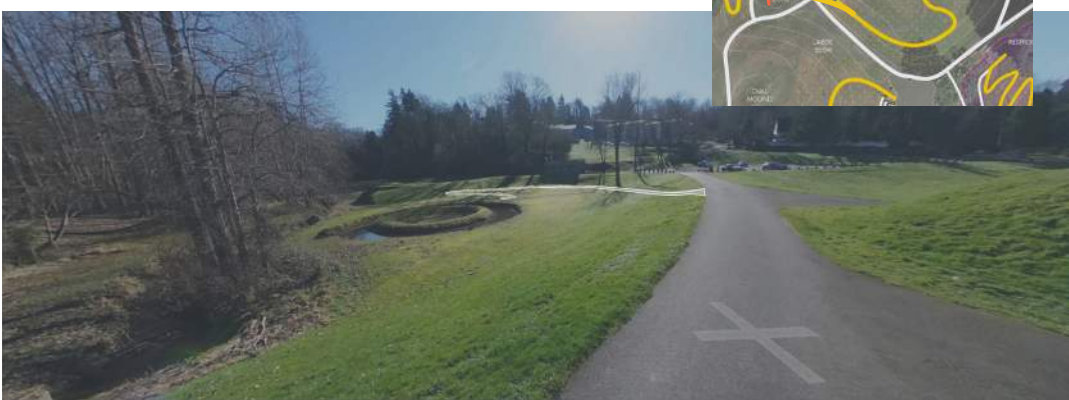
Titus Path Option 1

Connect to bowl berm



Pond Path Option 2

Less impact to existing path



Titus Path Option 2

Maintain long curved paths



Pond Path Option 3

Least impact to existing path



Titus Path Option 3

Maintain bowl topography



Proposed Park Improvements: Meadow

Concept: Celebrate accessible experiences to the creek and canyon trailhead, as well as providing opportunities for nature play areas in the meadow zone.

Existing Conditions: The meadow is an easily accessible open lawn surrounded by wooded hillsides, bisected by the creek piped under the meadow. Flanked by the sediment pond to the north and the canyon trailhead to the south, the meadow unfolds in a sequence of small to large clearings. Existing creek access occurs in three places. A more detailed assessment is needed to determine where increased creek access will have the least erosion and water quality impacts on the creek.

Size: 4 acres

Physical Program: A short term and a long-term program is proposed. The programming has been established based on anticipation of increased park use over time, park operations and management capacity and public engagement feedback. A meadow would provide seasonal stormwater storage and is integrated with nature play areas on decks and boardwalks. Decks and boardwalks would be located to avoid critical area setbacks. Improvements such as boardwalks, nature play, etc. are allowed within the creek setback if they are outside of the Ordinary High-Water Mark (OHWM).


Creek access from the meadow exists in multiple locations. A particularly popular location is south of the sediment pond. Future studies of creek access will be needed to determine the least impactful locations for public creek access on water quality and biodiversity as well as for public comfort.


Recreation and Cultural Opportunities: Access to the existing restroom at Earthworks Park makes this a potential day camp and outdoor learning site.

Legend

- |||||

—






SITE BOUNDARY


LANDMARK BOUNDARY


ASPHALT PATH


SEDIMENTATION CONTROL / COMPENSATORY STORAGE


EXISTING PARKING











TRAILHEAD

BRIDGE

TRAIL

BOARDWALK

BENCHES

Phase 1

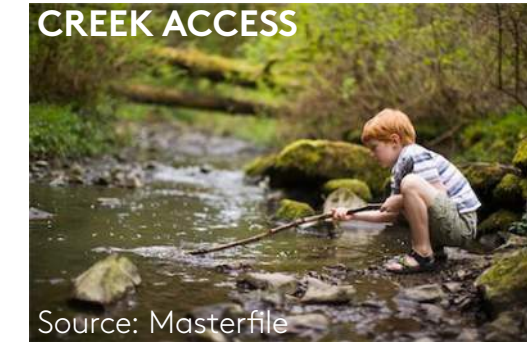


Phase 2



Precedent Images

CREEK ACCESS



Source: Masterfile

BOARDWALK



Source: Go Hike Virginia

NATURE PLAY TRAIL



Source: Marianne Levinsen

MEADOW



Source: City of Kent

110

Proposed Park Improvements: Plateau

Concept: A loop trail with a series of nature-based, social, and active recreation experiences along the way.

Existing Conditions: The plateau is a sloped, forested site with large open areas and a grade that drops below the adjacent road as the site moves to the south. The site is adjacent to the American Legion site – an outparcel within the park and is adjacent to the nearby Kent Meridian High School and Campus Park.

Size: 6.6 acres

Physical Program: A short term and a long-term program is proposed. The programs have been established based on anticipation of increased park use over time, park operations and management capacity and public engagement feedback. A loop trail surrounds terraced stormwater storage integrated with nature play, seating and overlooks. Trailheads at the road and an overlook from Canyon Drive connect trails to the surrounding neighborhood.

In the long-term program, a pedestrian overpass walkway connects this improvement area with Campus Park and the surrounding neighborhood. In addition, an access trail connects to the lower canyon trail network and a ravine bridge creating a new experience and overlook views into the canyon and the overall park. Gathering plazas and star-gazing platforms as well as public art, and an outdoor exercise area further establish this as an important connector and destination.

Recreation and Cultural Opportunities: There are many partnership opportunities with local organizations and nearby schools. This could include native plant restoration parties, Indigenous-led educational opportunities, citizen science with Kent Meridian High School, birdwatching meet-ups, and star gazing events at overlooks. In an ongoing partnership with the American Legion, a trail easement and use of the existing parking lot has been established. In the future, a potential property acquisition would create a contiguous park experience.

Legend

- SITE BOUNDARY
-

TRAIL
- ★

PUBLIC ART
- FOREST RESTORATION
- SHRUB RESTORATION
- MEADOW RESTORATION
- T

TRAILHEAD
- ➔

TRAIL ACCESS POINT
- PLAY/EXERCISE AREA
- GATHERING AREA
- |||||

BOARDWALK

Phase 1



Phase 2



Precedent Images



Proposed Park Improvements: Forest Canopy

Concept: Accentuate the tree top experience and highlight the sense of being on the rim of the canyon.

Existing Conditions: A right-of-way/street behind a retail center. Perched at the canyon rim with mature fir trees on the east side and forested canyon slope on the west side with multiple unimproved trails into the canyon. The road needs to be formally removed from the Transportation Master Plan to allow for this improvement.

Size: 3 acres; 50' to 100' wide depending on the location and 1,400' long (1/4 mile)

Physical Program: The phased program implementation has been established based on anticipation of increased park use over time, park operations and management capacity and public engagement feedback. Trailhead plazas are located at both ends of improvement area. Sections of the road paving would be removed and replaced with plant restoration, interpretive plantings, and pathways connecting painted play areas on existing road paving.

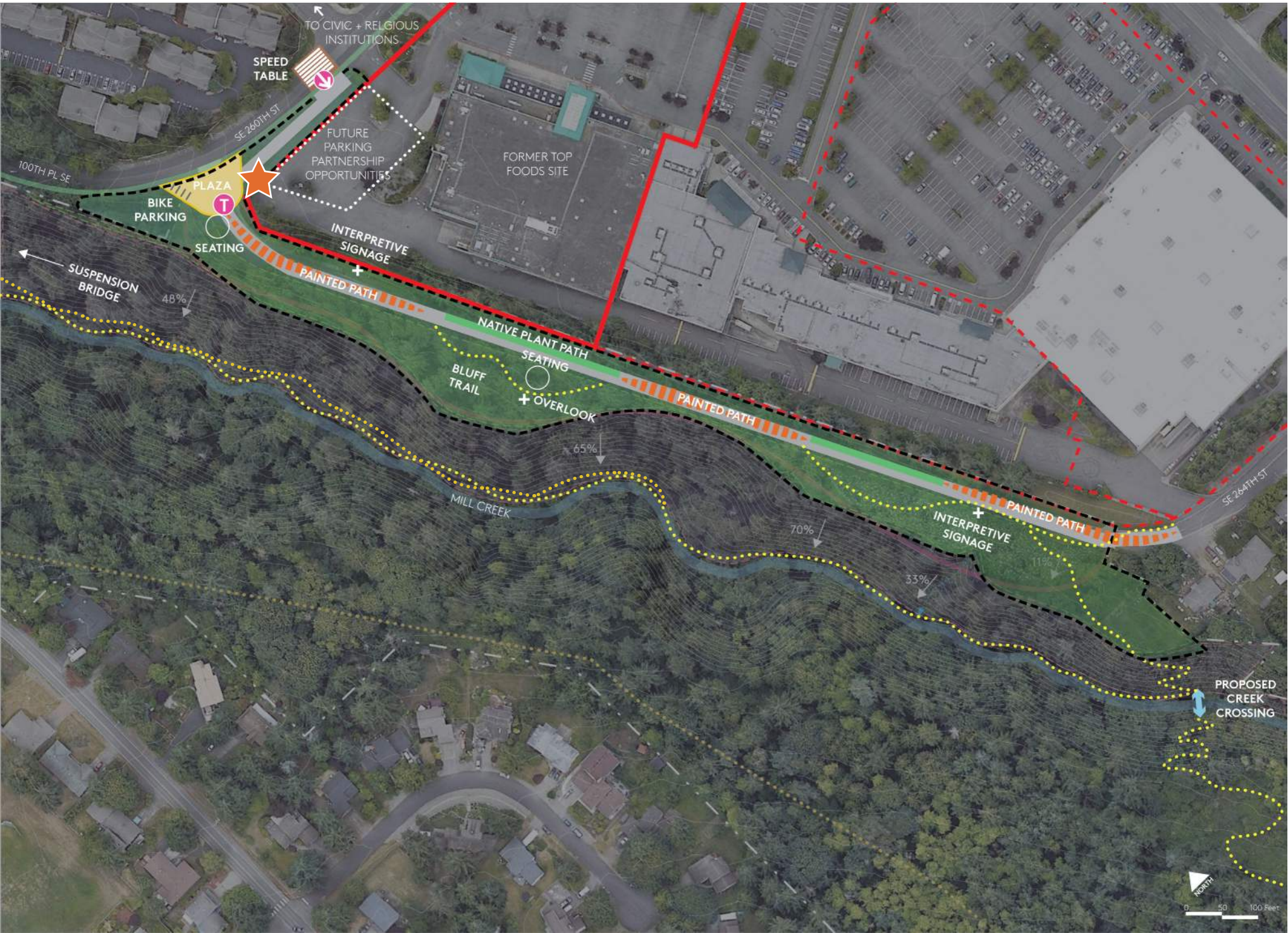
Future program includes a bluff trail, native plant walk and play areas. A potential suspension bridge nearby that crosses the canyon could support pedestrian connections to and from future mixed-use redevelopment, providing an alternative route to and from high school and reducing pressure on the existing bike and pedestrian network. Partnership opportunities for parking to be discussed with current and future landowners of adjacent properties, likely to be developed on the future property. Studies will be needed for relationship of adjacent property redevelopment should housing be designed to face the park. There are opportunities for shared space and public-private partnerships along the edge of linear park and future development.

Recreation and Cultural Opportunities: Pop up games, retail incubators, special events, outdoor sculpture and art classes, festivals and food trucks.

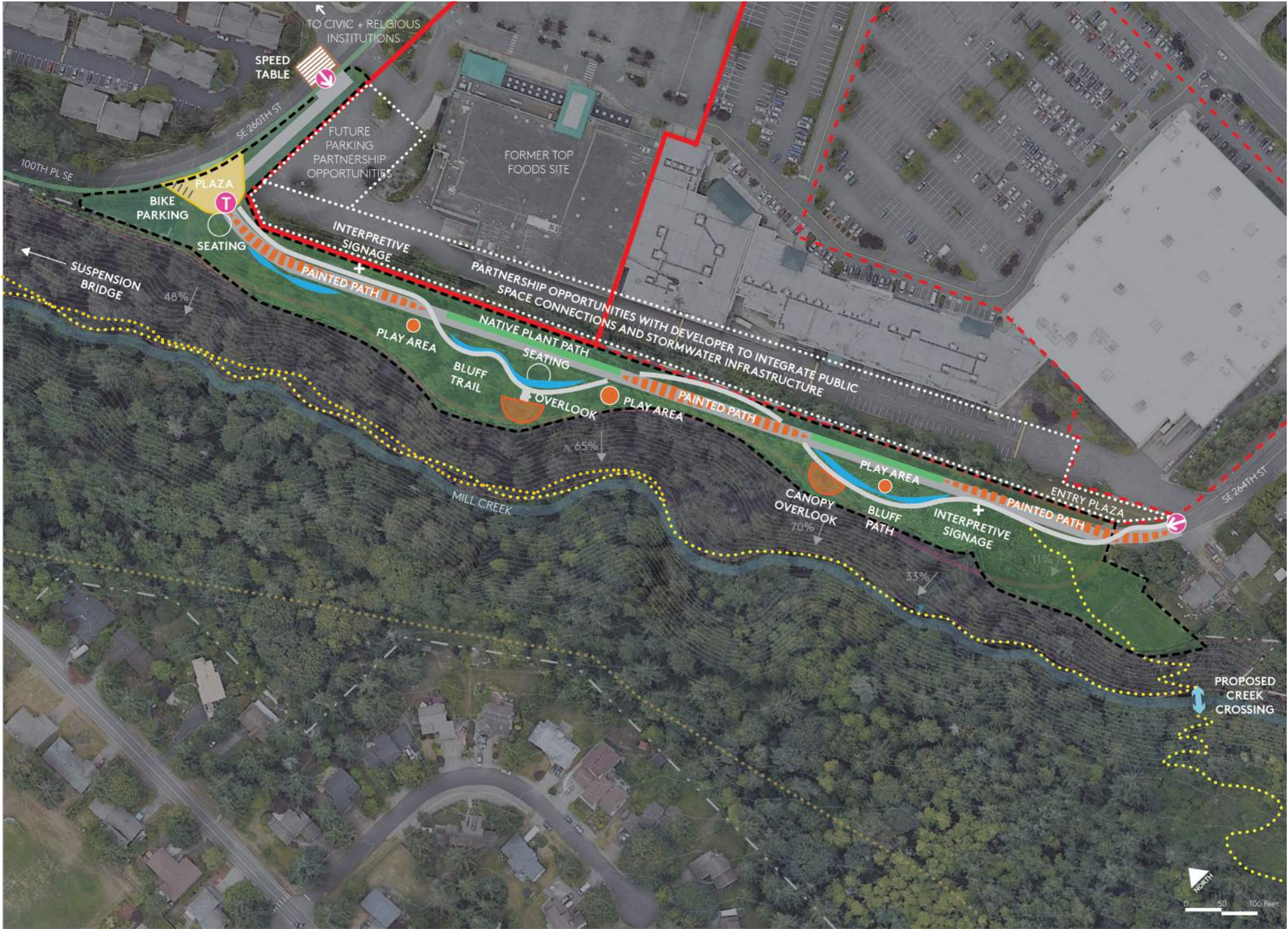
Legend

- | | |
|-------------------------------|----------------------|
| --- SITE BOUNDARY | T TRAILHEAD |
| ... TRAIL | ➡ PARK ENTRANCES |
| — DEVELOPMENT SITE | ● PLAY AREA |
| - - - POTENTIAL DEVELOP. AREA | + SITE OF INTEREST |
| ★ PUBLIC ART | ○ SEATING |
| ■ FOREST RESTORATION | ■ NATIVE PLANT PATH |
| ■ SHRUB RESTORATION | ■ STORMWATER FEATURE |

Phase 1



Phase 2



Precedent Images



Proposed Park Improvements: Upstream

Concept: A neighborhood park and trailhead at the top of the canyon. Connection to regional Green River Trail.

Existing Conditions: Former single family residential lots with mature trees and forested edge. Remnant orchard trees and clearings in the forest. Mostly level, sloping to the northeast into the canyon.

Size: 5.25 acre

Physical Program: A short term and a long-term program is proposed. The programs have been established based on anticipation of increased park use over time, park operations and management capacity and public engagement feedback. The program includes a restroom, parking spaces, an entrance plaza featuring iconic native planting and public art, a loop trail and trailhead that leads to an accessible trail and a challenging trail. Nature play, a play structure, and a sensory trail are included for all abilities. Challenging hike/trail connection across low creek crossing to Forest Canopy Park.

Future program elements include additional nature play areas, picnic shelters, an outdoor classroom, and barbecues.

Recreation and Cultural Opportunities: Restrooms and parking support day camps and outdoor learning. Naturalist program supported by accessible trail to elementary school. Recreational programs on flexible lawn space.

Legend

Phase 1



Phase 2



Precedent Images



IMPLEMENTATION

PHASING, FUNDING, OPERATIONS, MAINTENANCE + PROGRAMS

Phasing Approach

Phasing the park and canyon improvements outlined in this framework plan has been based on multiple, integrated factors – community feedback, economic development opportunities, transportation and park funding potential, and a ten-year capital budget plan.

This Framework Plan updates the 20-year vision for the future of this important greenway. The plan is developed in the spirit of the city’s comprehensive plan, including the multimodal goals of the 2021 Transportation Master Plan (TMP), which prioritizes Safety, Connectivity, Strategy, Stewardship and Placemaking. Some of the larger elements and projects are costly and require coordination with entities outside of Kent, such as the Washington Department of Transportation for programming, development and implementation. The City intends to explore these project concepts in a future TMP update where they will be prioritized among other critical projects city-wide, and if appropriate, will then move through a more comprehensive planning and design process.

Community feedback that drives the phasing approach is multi-fold – through layered investment and increased programming of park space we can make sure that we fulfill the public's strong desire for more awareness and visibility of the existing park, canyon and trail system; improvements and expansion of the trail system to serve all abilities and generations with varied experiences; and a focus on restoring Earthworks Park and reviving it’s history of cultural programming.

An assessment of economic development opportunities suggests that prioritizing improvements at each end of the park and canyon will complement adjacent potential redevelopment sites and create regional trail connections that will bring more users to the park, canyon and downtown Kent. The Top Food site to the south and the St Vincent de Paul site to the north both have long term potential for housing and mixed use which creates synergy with the park and canyon.

Combined with a robust trail network, these opportunities make multi-modal transportation and park funding appealing, especially in the context of a trail network that creates more equitable access to the park for the East Hill neighborhood and supplements the existing bike and pedestrian network.

The ten-year capital budget plan proposes \$10m of capital investments in Mill Creek Canyon Earthworks Park. As grants, partnerships and other funding sources emerge through the development of the park system an additional \$4-6m is conservatively anticipated. Repeating what was laid out in the 2022 POSP Plan, significant capital investments such as this require long-term operational investment to sustain the capital investment. The following pages will lay out the required operations and maintenance funding needed to make these facilities successful.

Priority Actions

Priority Action 1: Trailhead Placemaking

- Trailheads are placemaking opportunities that will combine public art, native seasonal plantings and informative kiosks that include information about trail length, level of challenge and the type of experience. These trailhead investments will increase awareness of the trail system, inviting in new uses and giving the public confidence that the canyon is controlled and cared for.

Priority Action 2: Earthworks Park as a Catalyst

- Reinforcing the value of Earthworks Park, the jewel of the Kent Park system, with improvements to path accessibility for universal accessibility and restoration of landscape and art features, Earthworks Park will be revived as a gathering space for Kent residents and an opportunity for special events.

Priority Action 3: Upstream Park as a Canyon Draw

- By creating the Upstream Park at the top of the canyon and headwaters of the creek, there is a clear destination for people beginning a canyon hike from downtown Kent, Earthworks Park or East Hill. Amenities at Upstream Park include bathrooms and

picnic tables that support a morning or afternoon round trip hike. Upstream Park is also a trailhead with parking into the canyon and out to the regional trail system, including the Interurban Trail and 277th Street Corridor Trail.

Ten-Year Capital Plan

The ten-year capital plan is projected to include improvements to the trail network, a pedestrian bridge and initial development of key sites such as the Forest Canopy, Plateau and Meadow which brings a diversity of experiences through nature play, social gathering, outdoor classrooms, environmental interpretation, public art and green stormwater infrastructure.

Future Phases (10+ years)

With increased population growth, the park and canyon will continue to attract more visitors and residents appreciative of the access to unique natural and cultural resources. As the park is more frequently used, additional physical and recreation programming will be introduced – serving a culturally diverse community.

Programs

With all of the planned improvements and increased demand from a growing population, there is need for a proportional increase to both O&M and Programs funding to support public use. O&M funding is described in greater detail in the next section, but attention must also be given to the need for more program funding to support things like special events, outdoor education, and cultural programming. The demand for these services is clearly outlined in the Comprehensive Recreation Program Plan and further confirmed with the engagement efforts of this plan. Kent Parks has seen reductions to funding for programs in recent years despite a clear desire from the public for expanded services. Our hope is that this plan is part of reversing that trend and results in sustainable funding to expand capacity for programs which contribute to an active park space.

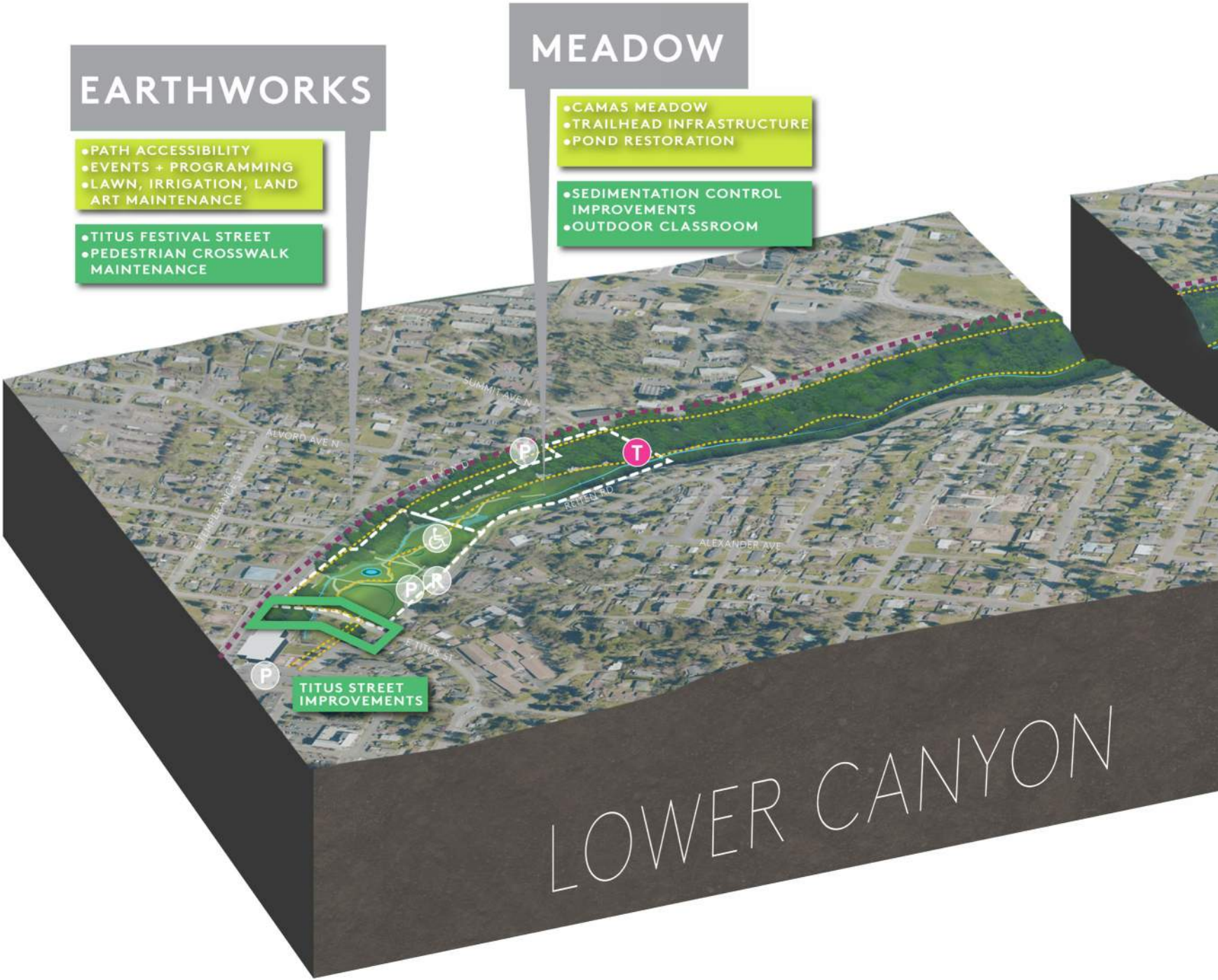


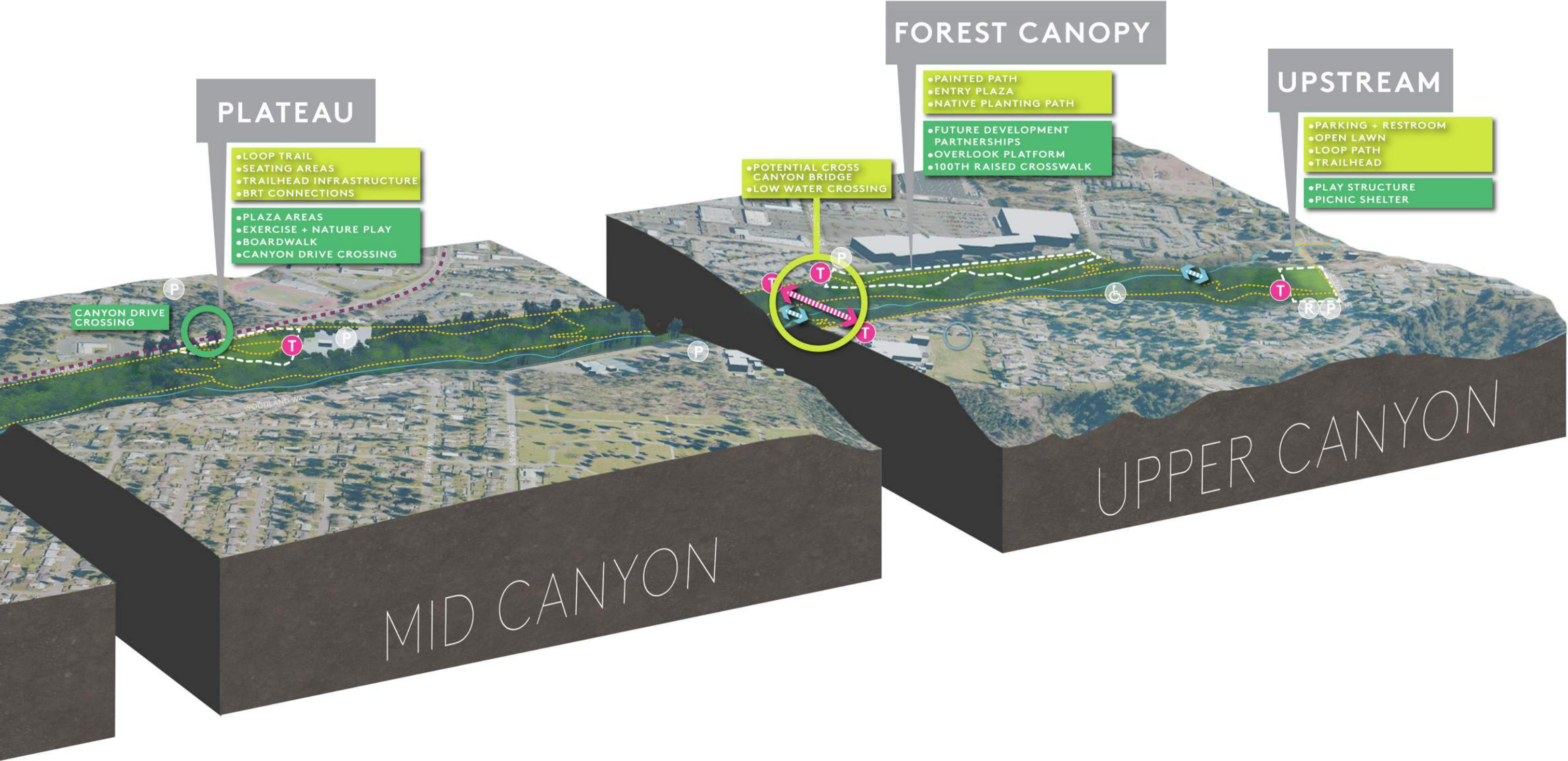
0-10 YEAR PLAN	
Trails and Trailheads	\$5.5M
Earthworks	\$2.4M
Upstream	\$2M
Meadow	\$1M
Plateau	\$2M
Forest Canopy	\$1M
Cross Canyon Bridge	\$2.1M
\$16M CAPITAL INVESTMENT	

10-20 YEAR PLAN	
Upstream	\$5M
Meadow	\$1M
Plateau	\$6M
Forest Canopy	\$4M
Titus Festival Street	\$ TBD
Canyon Drive Overpass	\$ TBD
\$16M CAPITAL INVESTMENT	

*The above numbers are planning level cost estimates and include escalation through January 2024. Estimates for work within the right-of-way requires further engineering.

- PHASE 1 INVESTMENTS
- PHASE 2 INVESTMENTS
- CAPITAL INVESTMENT





Operations + Maintenance

Park capital improvements are a down payment on the success of that park, and to the communities that it serves. A well-funded, staffed, and executed Operations and Maintenance management plan (O+M) is the sustained investment that will fulfill that long-term commitment to community success.

A well-planned, funded and executed O+M management plan is critical to the successful legacy of any public open space. Furthermore, a well-resourced and sustained O+M plan demonstrates a commitment to the public, community and place. A successful O+M management plan takes into account routine and preventative maintenance, establishes metrics that set the terms of success, and adapts to change.

O+M funding will address routine and preventative maintenance, as well as adapt as more park improvements are integrated over time and park use increases as a result. Well-executed routine and preventative maintenance will prolong the lifecycle of the capital improvements. This will extend the value of the money invested at the outset, as it will reduce frequency by which they need to be replaced.

Approach:

O+M estimates are based on three factors: the tasks to be performed, the time it takes to perform each of those tasks based on a unit basis (for example, by square foot, or "eaches"), and the frequency that each task is performed (levels of service). For the purposes of this report, the estimate was based on tasks provided by Kent Parks and Recreation with any missing additional tasks being added from nationally-recognized standards; the task times were based by comparing new elements to similar park elements within the Kent Parks system, and the task frequency mirrors current operating levels of service. Finally, current wage levels were used to calculate labor costs for each area, as well as factoring material needs. Equipment costs were not included in the estimate.

Routine and reactive maintenance tasks within Mill Creek Canyon are complicated by significant challenges to site access and coordination among multiple work groups. Steep canyon walls prevent the use of most heavy equipment and require maintenance workers to pack-in tools and pack-out garbage and debris. This adds a multiplier to each task that is difficult to quantify, but will be better understood as more maintenance data is gathered.

1. Current Operations Summary

Organization

- For 2023, there was a total of 2,698 employee hours spent at Earthworks Park and Mill Creek Canyon combined, which equates to a 1.3 FTE position equivalent. Most maintenance tasks at Earthworks Park include routine and periodic maintenance of

hardscape, lawns, irrigation, fountains, green infrastructure, parking lots and site furnishings. Work inside Mill Creek Canyon typically consists of trail maintenance, hazard tree removal, invasive species removal, trash clean up and encampment management. While level of service standards at Earthworks Park are level B, the rest of the canyon has a lower frequency as most of the acreage is considered undeveloped.

Natural Resource Management Team:

- The overall Park Operations division’s primary focus regarding natural resources is to manage publicly accessible natural areas and standalone trees within our developed parks areas, focusing on mitigating negative impacts to public use such as garbage and encampment removal, maintaining recreational amenities such as trails, site furniture and views and vegetation for long term ecological value and to maintain public safety.
- Kent Parks is at the beginning of a major shift in natural resources management. Over recent years, division leadership and staff successfully made the case for formation of a focused natural resources management program. This team now manages all natural areas and our urban forest for long term ecological function, environmental engagement, and the community opportunities they provide.
- Park Operations has 5 FTE positions focused on natural resources, which encompasses natural areas and urban forest management throughout the entire park system. The workplan for these positions is prioritized to support site management for approximately 600 acres across 30 sites (including encampment and illicit activity response), and urban forest management across all acres of our park system.
- The Mill Creek Canyon corridor is one of the sites that was used as a case study to build the case for the formation of this new team, and as such, more detailed information on the time required to manage its challenges and, hopefully, maximize its opportunities. Even with detailed hourly information from 2022 and 2023, there are some aspects of managing a site with this acreage, slope, hydrology, jurisdictional complexity, and site use challenges that will make adaptive management crucial to future staffing.

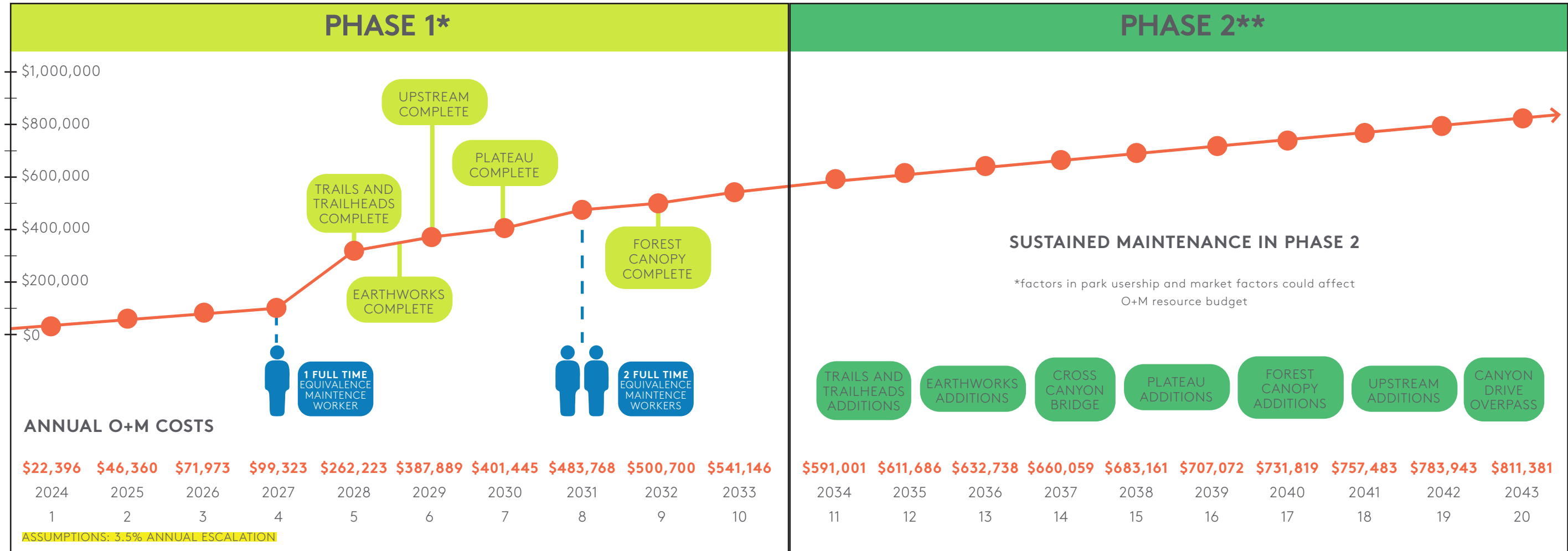
2. Future Operations

- What does the plan mean from an O+M perspective?
 - Organization: As the Mill Creek Canyon/ Earthworks Park Vision is executed over time, the demands of the new facilities, and the added focus on trail restoration and management, as well as forest canopy management will require additional funding, staffing and service agreements contracts beyond what are currently in place. The budget to fund on-site maintenance efforts (labor and materials) is anticipated to increase yearly through the end of Phase One, which is driven by a significant expansion of Mill Creek Canyon into a chain of parks. The improvement of existing facilities, the addition of new amenities, as well as escalation all contribute to these costs. Phase 2 of the plan also sees increases in O+M budgets, though primarily driven by escalation. The type of maintenance tasks will not change significantly from what are already being performed, but the frequency of touches is likely to increase as user demand increases with park popularity.

Based on early projections of phased implementation of projects, there will be two occasions where additional FTE Maintenance hours will need to be added to the O+M teams in order to maintain the level of service needed to keep the parks safe, operational, and attractive to users. The first is in 2026/2027, at the completion of trail and trailhead enhancements throughout Mill Creek Canyon. These improvements will require an additional Maintenance Worker Level III. The second occurs in 2030/2031, at the completion of the Plateau and Upstream, when an additional Maintenance Worker Level II will be required. The year of completion is assuming all funding is available and that there are sufficient project management resources to implement this work.

— Skills: The focus on green infrastructure and canopy management will require workers skilled in invasive management, Integrated Pest Management, ecological restoration, Urban forest management, and arboriculture. Park Operations will seek service agreement contracts to supplement in-house work as needed.

- Implementation
 - i. See O+M implementation overlay



*Phase 1 is prioritized
**Phase 2 in no particular order



2,080 hours of maintenance per year = 1 full time equivalence maintenance worker



4,160 hours of maintenance per year = 2 full time equivalence maintenance workers

ANNUAL COST 2024

\$22,396

OPERATIONS + MAINTENANCE

ANNUAL COST 2034

\$591,001

OPERATIONS + MAINTENANCE

+3 NEW PARKS

+1 PARK IMPROVEMENT

+ TRAIL AND TRAILHEADS IMPROVEMENTS

Appendix—

