

Dunlap Wheeler Park

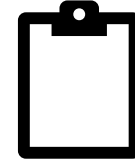
Open Space & Fields Committee Meeting #2

March 19, 2025



Today's Meeting Agenda

- **Review Community Survey**



- **Discuss Potential Environmental Solutions**



- **Review Conceptual Design Options**



Project Team

Ron Wolanski

Director of Planning and Economic Development | Town of Middletown

Anita Guo

Principal Planner | Town of Middletown

Randall Collins

Principal | BETA

Nate Socha

Landscape Architect | BETA

Project Goals

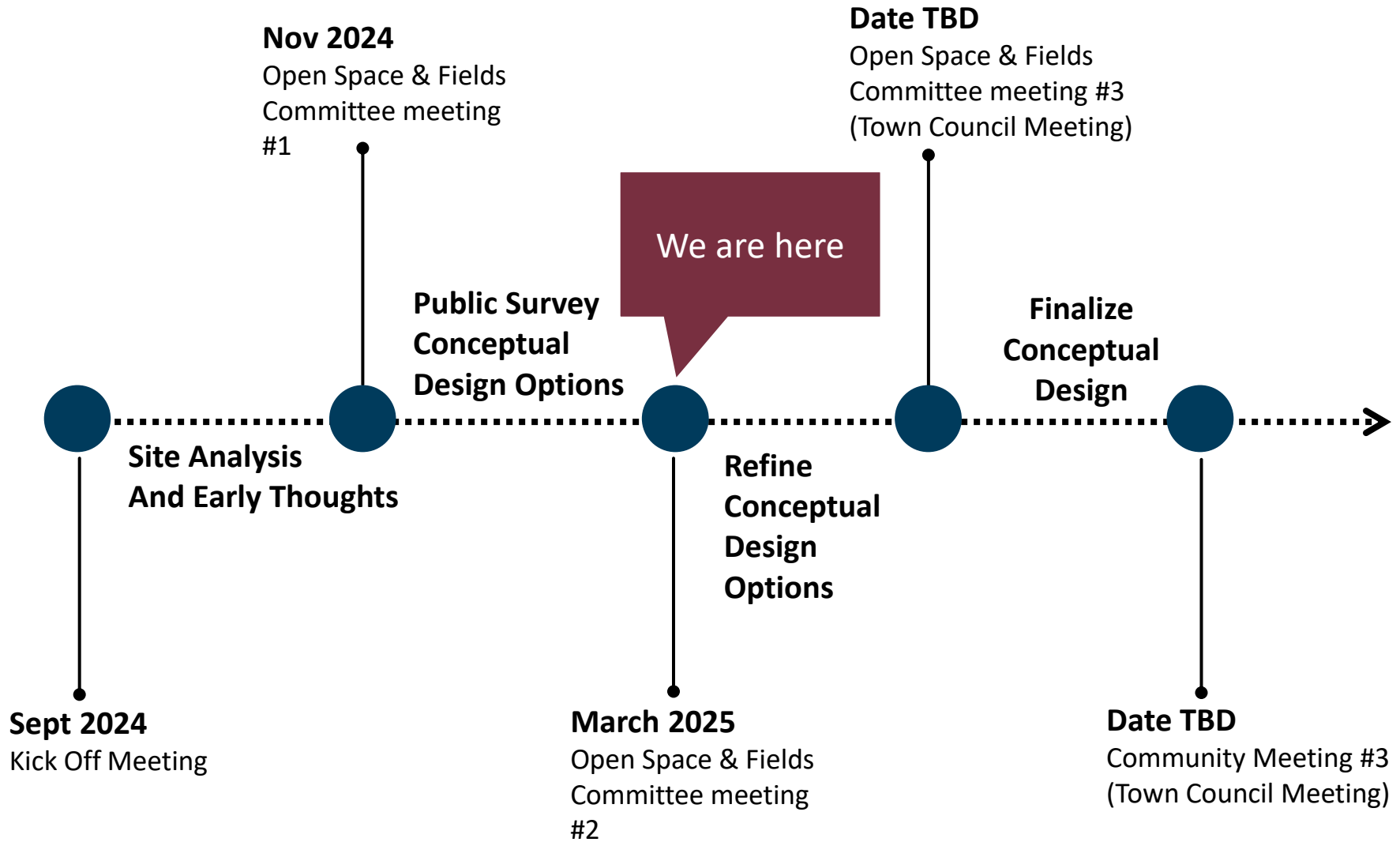
Design Goals

- **Enhance Accessibility and Amenities** - Ensure ADA compliance, convenient parking, and well-planned pathways.
- **Create an Inviting Gateway** - Design an active, welcoming park entrance with attractive landscaping.
- **Incorporate Sustainable, Resilient Solutions** - Implement stormwater, low-maintenance, and climate-resilient features.
- **Improve Connectivity** - Strengthen links to Newport's Easton's Beach and nearby areas.

Implementation Goals

- **Engage the Community** - Gather public input through workshops and surveys to guide design.
- **Plan for Development and Maintenance** - Provide estimates and a phased implementation plan for longevity.
- **Ensure Construction Readiness** - Prepare compliant construction documents and streamline permitting.

Project Schedule



Since Last Meeting

- Completed Resource Area Delineation (Wetlands)
- Finalized Property Survey
- Searched for the Anne Slater Dunlap Plaque
- Reviewed historic documents on the park from Rowena
- Reviewed deed restrictions
- Developed and reviewed a Community Survey
- Analyzed community feedback and developed three concepts



Middletown community members, we want to hear from you!

Your input is essential in shaping the future of Dunlap Wheeler Park! Please take a few minutes to share your thoughts on how the park is used today and what improvements you'd like to see by scanning the QR code below.

Take the survey today!



SCAN ME

<https://forms.office.com/?TwpBRTpNsh>

About the Dunlap Wheeler Park Improvement Project

The Town of Middletown, in partnership with BETA Group, is working on a masterplan to enhance Dunlap Wheeler Park to better serve the community. Located adjacent to Easton Beach, this vital park provides a valuable recreational space for both residents and visitors. This project aims to improve park amenities, enhance environmental sustainability, and ensure the space is welcoming and accessible for all.

Community Survey Key Takeaways

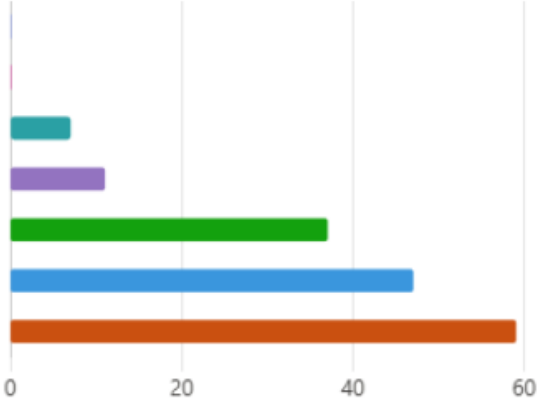
- 161 Responses
- Most visitors engage in walking and enjoying beach views, with peak activity during the summer.
- Limited parking and a lack of amenities were the most frequently cited challenges.
- There is strong interest in enhanced seating, seasonal programming, and nature-based improvements (e.g., native plantings, coastal dune protection).
- Respondents overwhelmingly support preserving the park's natural character and prioritizing environmental sustainability.
- Sentiment was mixed regarding making the park more tourist friendly.

Community Survey

What is your age group?

[More details](#)

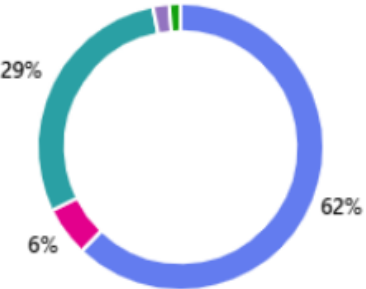
● Under 18	0
● 18-24	0
● 25-34	7
● 35-44	11
● 45-54	37
● 55-64	47
● 65 and older	59



What is your relationship to Dunlap Wheeler Park?

[More details](#)

● I live nearby and visit regularly year-round	100
● I work nearby / Own a local business	9
● I live nearby but mostly visit during the summer	47
● I am a seasonal visitor (e.g., tourist or part-time resident)	3
● I am visiting for the first time	2

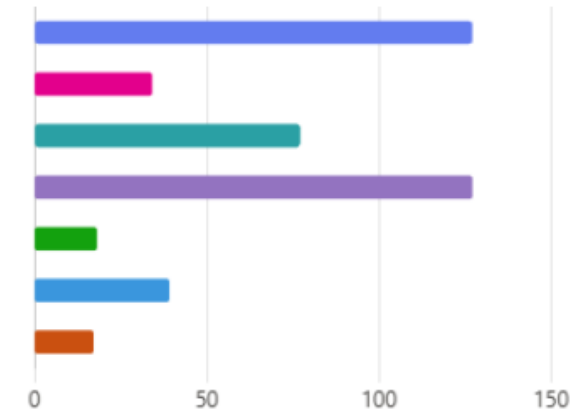


Community Survey

What activities do you currently enjoy at Dunlap Wheeler Park? (Select all that apply)

[More details](#)

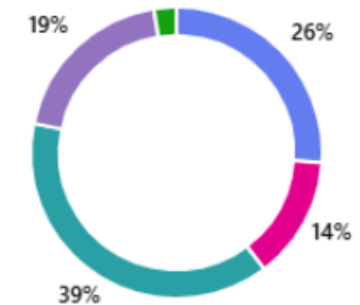
● Walking or strolling	127
● Picnicking	34
● Going to the beach	77
● Relaxing/enjoying views of the beach	127
● Attending events (e.g., festivals or concerts)	18
● Dining or shopping in the nearby district	39
● Other	17



How often do you visit Dunlap Wheeler Park during the summer season?

[More details](#)

● Multiple times a week	42
● Once a week	22
● A few times a month	62
● Rarely	31
● Never	4

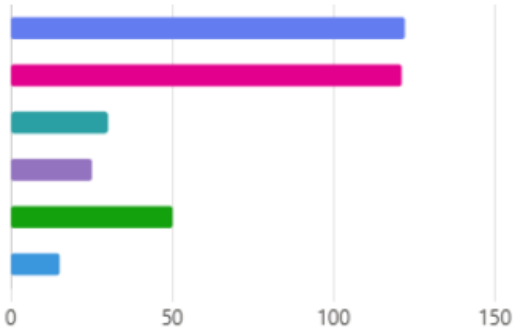


Community Survey

What draws you to the park? (Select all that apply)

[More details](#)

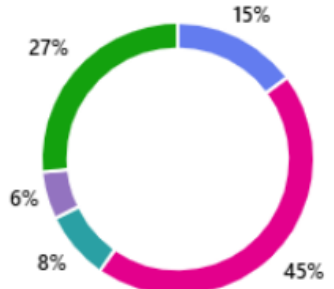
● Proximity to the beach	122
● Open green space	121
● Nearby shops, restaurants, and hotels	30
● Seasonal events or activities	25
● Parking	50
● Other	15



What challenges or concerns do you face when visiting Dunlap Wheeler Park? (Select all that apply)

[More details](#)

● Lack of amenities	29
● Limited parking	88
● Accessibility challenges	16
● Seasonal closures of nearby businesses	11
● Other	52



Community Survey

10. What new features or amenities would make Dunlap Wheeler Park more appealing year-round? (Open-ended)

[More details](#)

161
Responses

Latest Responses

"Benches, a nicer walkway"

"More seating. Maybe even a small gazebo. Open Air Farmers Market. Definit..."

"more goup seating areas , I strongly oppose the idea of pergolas or gazebo ..."

...

20 respondents (12%) answered park for this question.

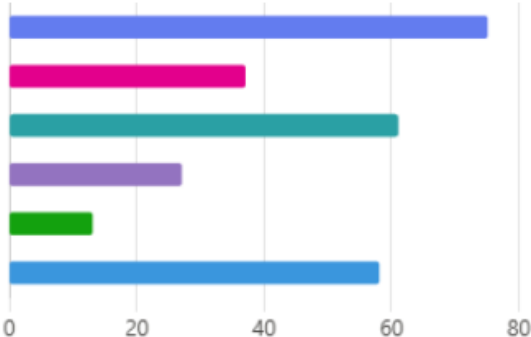


Community Survey

Which of the following would enhance your experience at the park? (Select all that apply)

[More details](#)

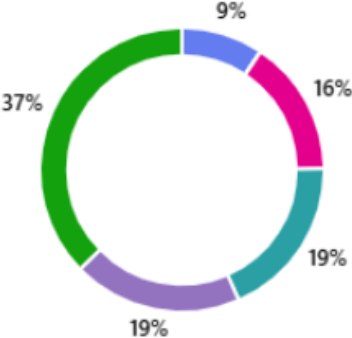
● Seasonal programming (e.g., markets, festivals)	75
● Outdoor fire pits or heaters	37
● Enhanced seating and shelter areas (e.g. Outdoor Patio)	61
● Small Playground Area	27
● Splash Pad	13
● Other	58



Would you support adding amenities and other elements that make the park more attractive to tourists?

[More details](#)

● Strongly support	15
● Somewhat support	25
● Neutral	30
● Somewhat oppose	31
● Strongly oppose	60

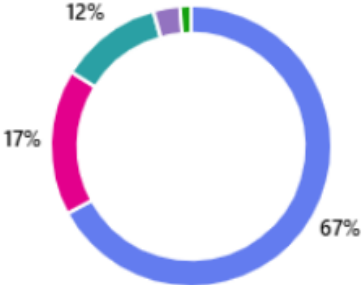


Community Survey

How important is it to maintain the park's natural aesthetic (keeping the park like how it is now)?

[More details](#)

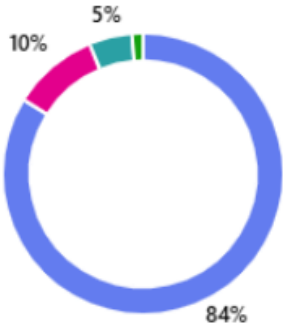
Very important	108
Important	27
Neutra	19
Not very important	5
Not important at all	2



How important is environmental preservation (e.g., dune protection, native plantings) in the park's design and maintenance?

[More details](#)

Very important	135
Important	16
Neutral	8
Not very important	0
Not important at all	2

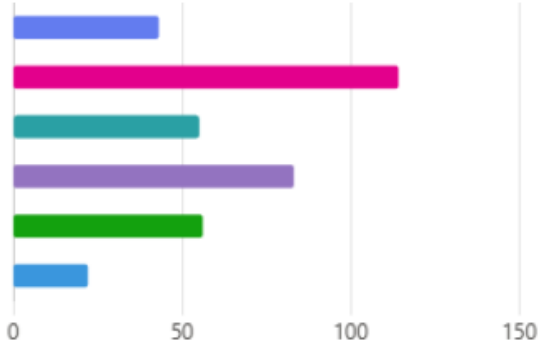


Community Survey

What nature-based solutions would you like to see implemented? (Select all that apply)

[More details](#)

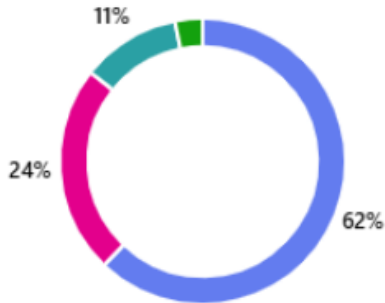
● Rain gardens	43
● Native plantings	114
● Stormwater channel restoration	55
● Coastal dunes with native beach grass	83
● Rebuilt the riprap retaining wal	56
● Other	22



Do you support efforts to improve resilience to coastal flooding and erosion?

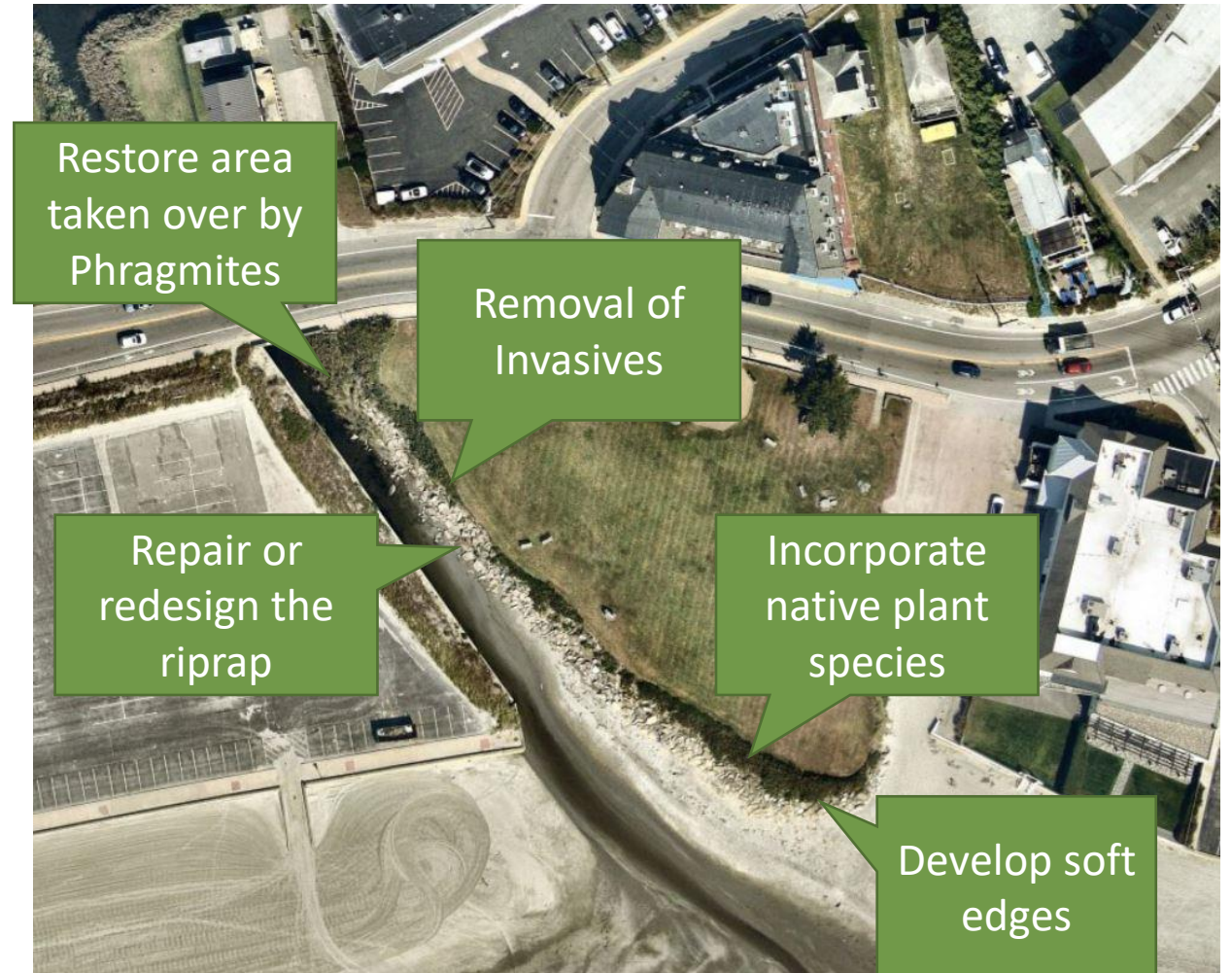
[More details](#)

● Strongly support	100
● Somewhat support	38
● Neutral	18
● Somewhat oppose	0
● Strongly oppose	5



Potential Environmental Solutions

- Removal of invasive plant species
- Incorporate native plant species into the design.
- Develop soft edges where feasible, including sacrificial or artificial dunes.
- Repair or redesign the riprap, integrating vegetation into the hard edge where possible.
- Remove phragmites along the stormwater outlet and evaluate whether the area can be sustained as an upland transition or high marsh landscape.



Removal of invasive plant species

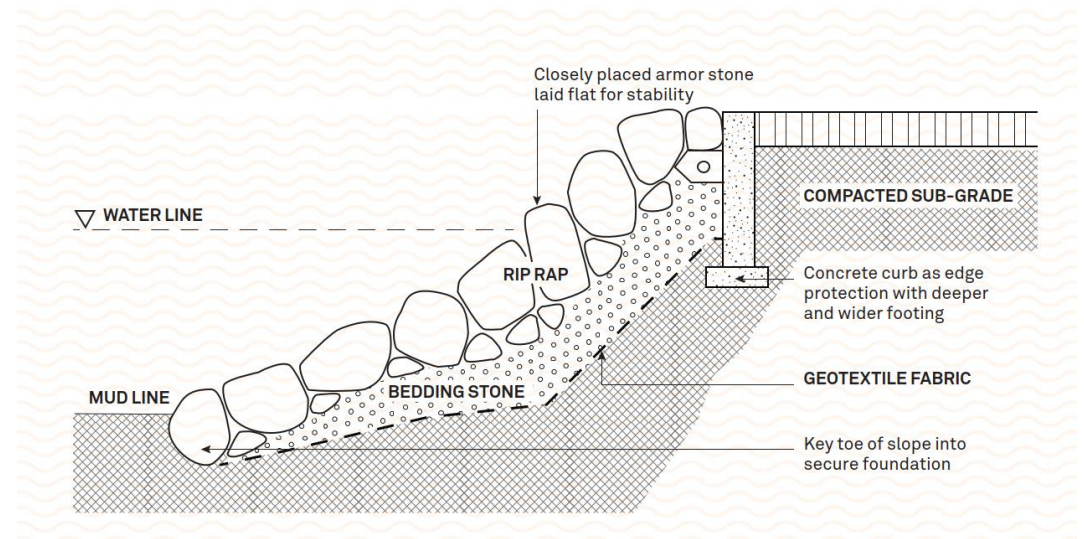
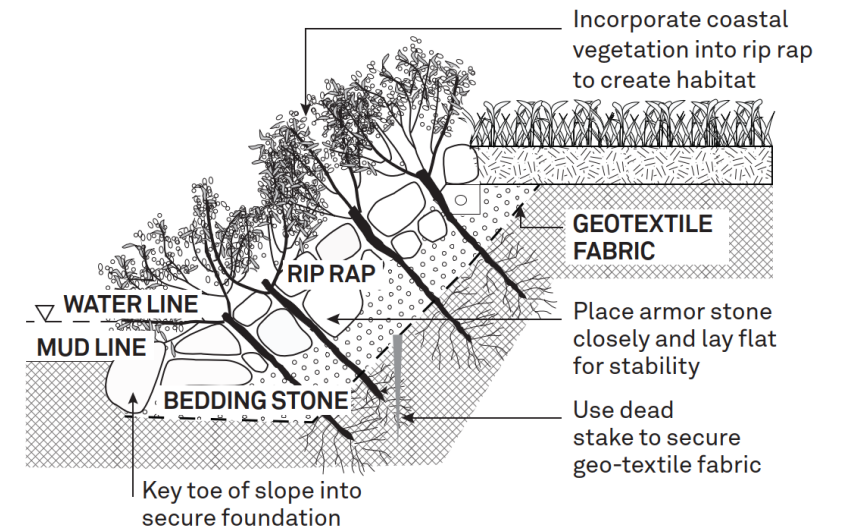
Invasive plant species include:

- Rugosa rose (*Rosa rugosa*)
- Honeysuckles (*Lonicera* spp.)
- Multiflora rose (*Rosa multiflora*)

Rugosa rose (*Rosa rugosa*) is an exotic invasive species that has naturalized in Rhode Island. It has historically been planted on dunes and barriers for its ability to stabilize sand and thrive in coastal conditions. Despite being invasive, its planting may be allowed in certain developed coastal and urban areas with CRMC staff approval.



Repair or redesign the riprap, integrating vegetation into the hard edge where possible.



Develop soft edges where feasible, including sacrificial or artificial dunes.

Species Typical of Maritime Dunes

Common Name

Northern bayberry

Beach grass

Beach pea

Seaside goldenrod

Sandy sedge

Switchgrass

Beach heather

Bearberry

Beach plum

Latin Name

Morella pensylvanica

Ammophila brevigulata

Lathyrus japonicus

Solidago sempervirens

Carex silicea

Panicum virgatum

Hudsonia tomentosa

Arctostaphylos uva-ursi

Prunus maritima



Remove phragmites and evaluate upland transition or high marsh landscape.

High Marsh Plants

Botanical Name

Spartina patens

Common Name

Saltmeadow Cordgrass

Example Typical High Marsh Plants Elevation Growth

Marsh type	Dominant Plant	Elevation (NAVD 88)
Low salt marsh	<i>Spartina alterniflora</i>	0.0 – 1.6 ft
High salt marsh	<i>Spartina patens</i>	1.7 – 2.6 ft
Phragmites/salt marsh mix	<i>Phragmites australis</i>	2.7 – 3.2+ ft

NAVD = North American Vertical Datum
ft = feet



Incorporate native plant species into the design

Common Name

Latin Name

Herbaceous

Beach grass

Beach pea

Seaside goldenrod

Sandy sedge

Switchgrass

Beach heather

Bearberry

Ammophila brevigulata

Lathyrus japonicus

Solidago sempervirens

Carex silicea

Panicum virgatum

Hudsonia tomentosa

Arctostaphylos uva-ursi

Shrubs

Bayberry

Beach Plum

Wild Rose

Morella pensylvanica

Prunus maritima

Rosa virginiana

Trees

Shadbush

Arrowwood

Eastern Red Cedar

Black Cherry

Pitch Pine

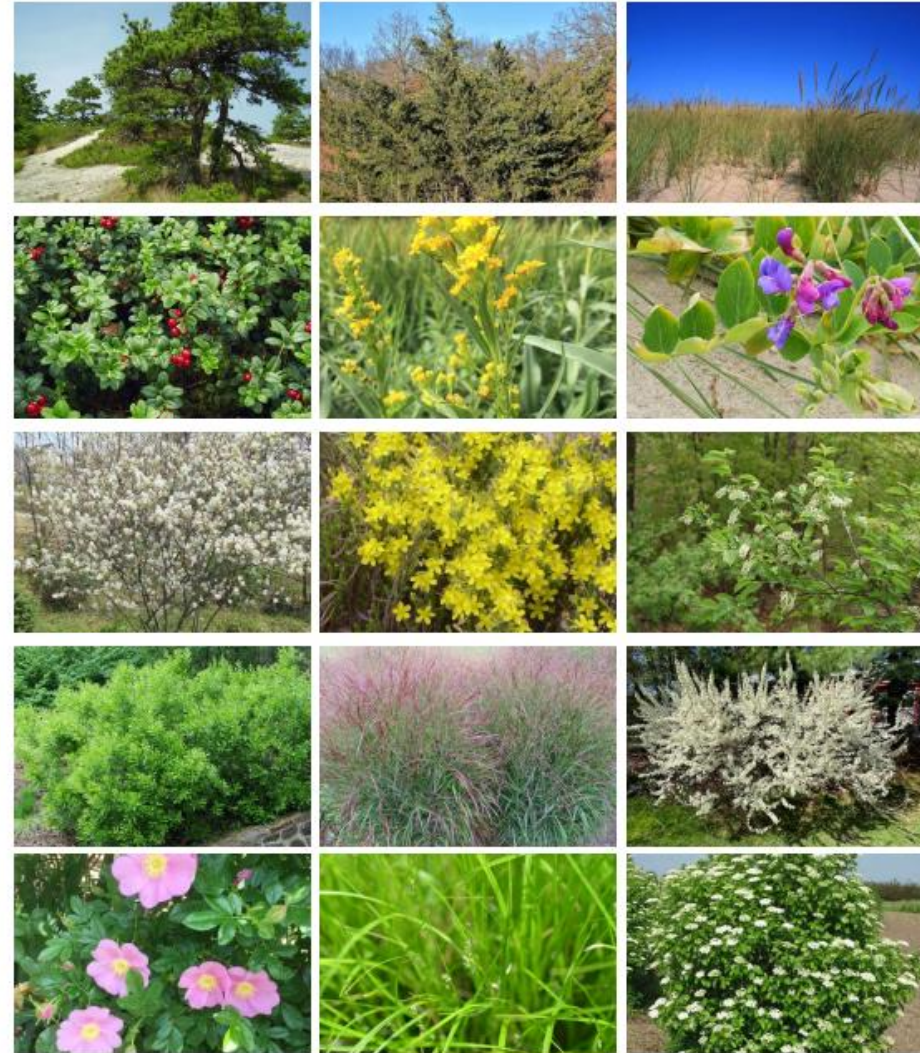
Amelanchier spp.

Viburnum dentatum

Juniperus virginiana

Prunus serotina

Pinus rigida





Dunlap Wheeler Park

Middletown, RI

Conceptual Design Options

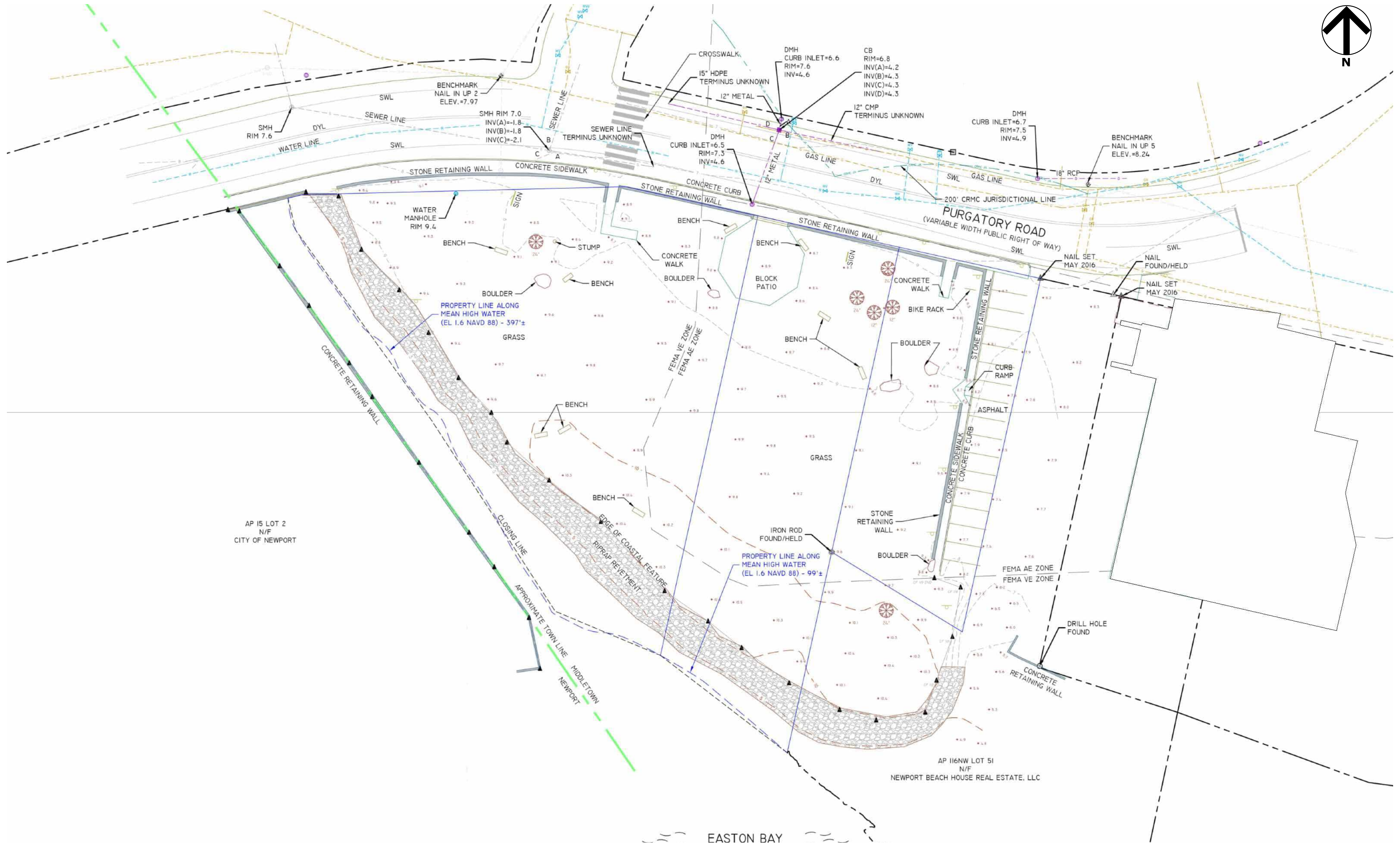
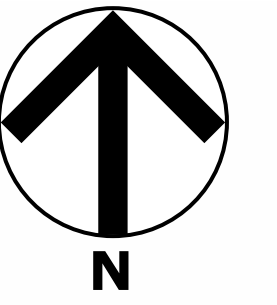
March 19, 2025

Prepared For:
Town of Middletown



Prepared by:





AP 15 LOT 2
N/F
CITY OF NEWPORT

AP 116NW LOT 51
N/F
NEWPORT BEACH HOUSE REAL ESTATE, LLC

EASTON BAY



Existing Conditions - Survey

Dunlap Wheeler Park | Town of Middletown



North

March 19, 2025

Scale: As Noted

0

20

50

100

2

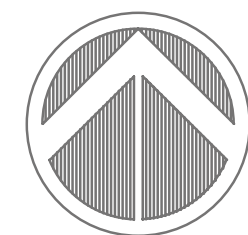
Middletown, RI





Existing Conditions - Aerial

Dunlap Wheeler Park | Town of Middletown



North

March 19, 2025

Scale: As Noted

0

20

50

100

3

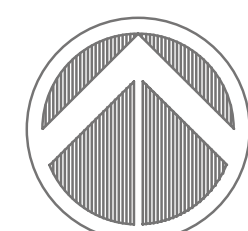
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Concept 1 - Site Plan

Dunlap Wheeler Park | Town of Middletown



North

March 19, 2025

Scale: As Noted

0

20

50

100

4

Middletown, RI





Concept 1 - View of the Overlook Seating Area

Dunlap Wheeler Park | Town of Middletown

March 19, 2025

Scale: As Noted

Middletown, RI

5





Concept 1 - Coastal Play Area

Dunlap Wheeler Park | Town of Middletown

March 19, 2025

Scale: As Noted

Middletown, RI

6





Concept 1 - Bird's Eye View

Dunlap Wheeler Park | Town of Middletown

March 19, 2025

Scale: As Noted

Middletown, RI

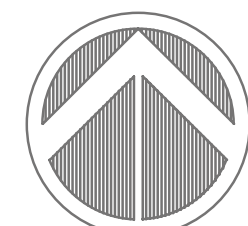
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Concept 2 - Site Plan

Dunlap Wheeler Park | Town of Middletown



North

March 19, 2025

Scale: As Noted

0

20

50

100

8

Middletown, RI





Concept 2 - Overlook

Dunlap Wheeler Park | Town of Middletown

March 19, 2025

Scale: As Noted

Middletown, RI

9





Concept 2 - Coastal Play Area

Dunlap Wheeler Park | Town of Middletown

March 19, 2025

Scale: As Noted

Middletown, RI

10





Concept 2 - Bird's Eye View

Dunlap Wheeler Park | Town of Middletown

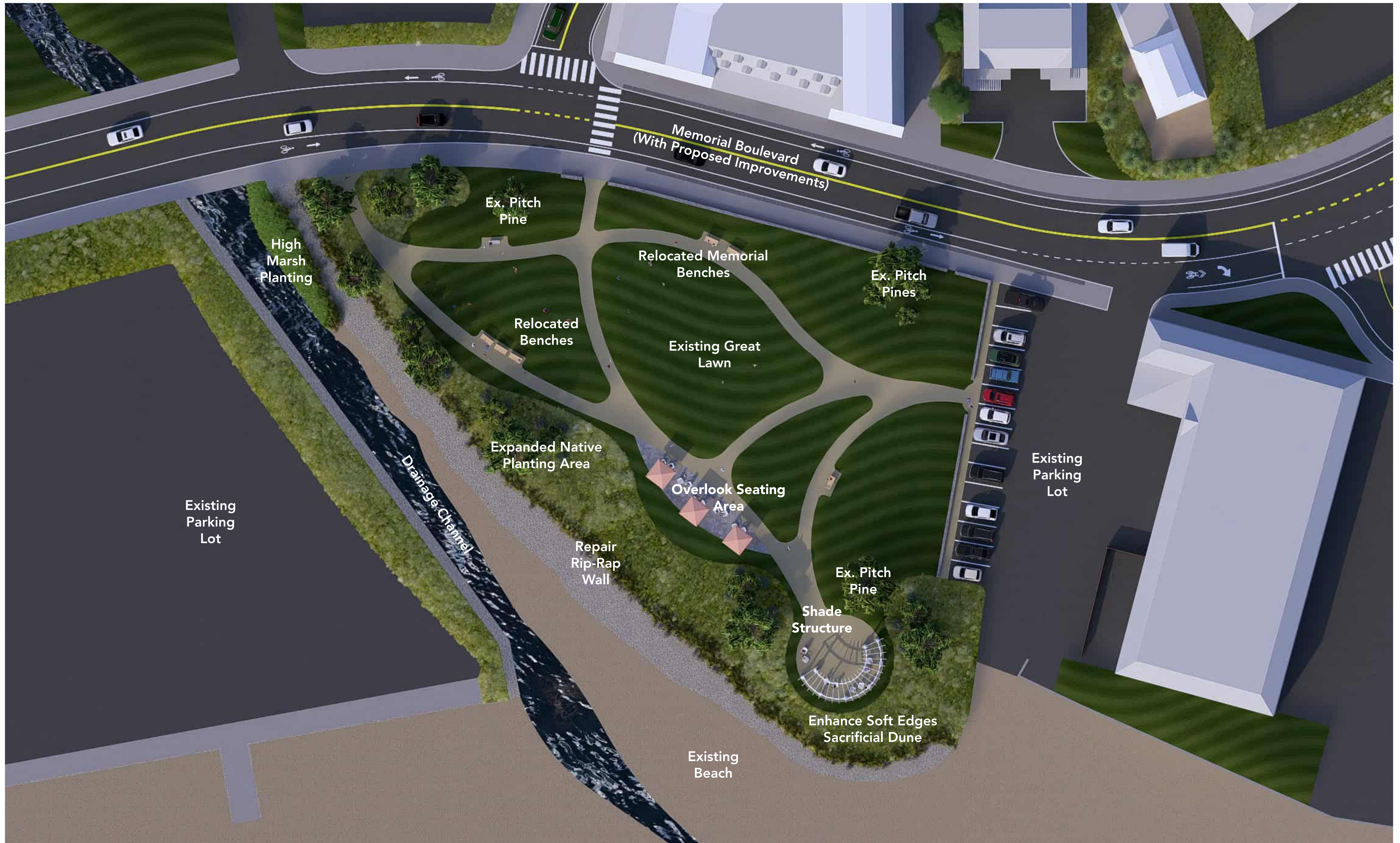
March 19, 2025

Scale: As Noted

Middletown, RI

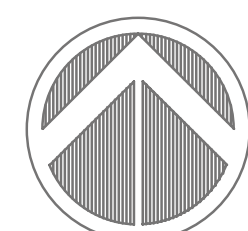
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Concept 3 - Site Plan

Dunlap Wheeler Park | Town of Middletown



North

March 19, 2025

Scale: As Noted



Middletown, RI

12





Concept 3 - View of the Shade Structure

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March 19, 2025

Scale: As Noted

Middletown, RI

13





Concept 3 - View of the Overlook Seating Area

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March 19, 2025

Scale: As Noted

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14





Concept 3 - Bird's Eye View

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March 19, 2025

Scale: As Noted

Middletown, RI

15

