



# Mushroom Park Oak Tree Nature Playground

City of Ann Arbor, Parks & Recreation

Public Meeting

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# Meeting Overview

## 01 Background & Context

Why is this project being done?

## 02 Proposed Design

Nature Playground Concept Design

Park Tree Plantings Design

## 03 Next Steps & Discussion

Construction timeline

Project updates





# 01

## Background & Context

Why is this project being done?

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- The 200-year old oak tree, a distinctive feature of Mushroom Park, was felled for safety reasons. Created the opportunity for a nature playground.
- We are using the trunk, stump, and branches from the tree to build a **nature playground** to complement the traditional playground already in place. No changes are planned to existing playground.
- Similar to tree nature playground at Barton Nature Area.

## Precedent: Great Oak Playground (Barton Nature Area), 2024

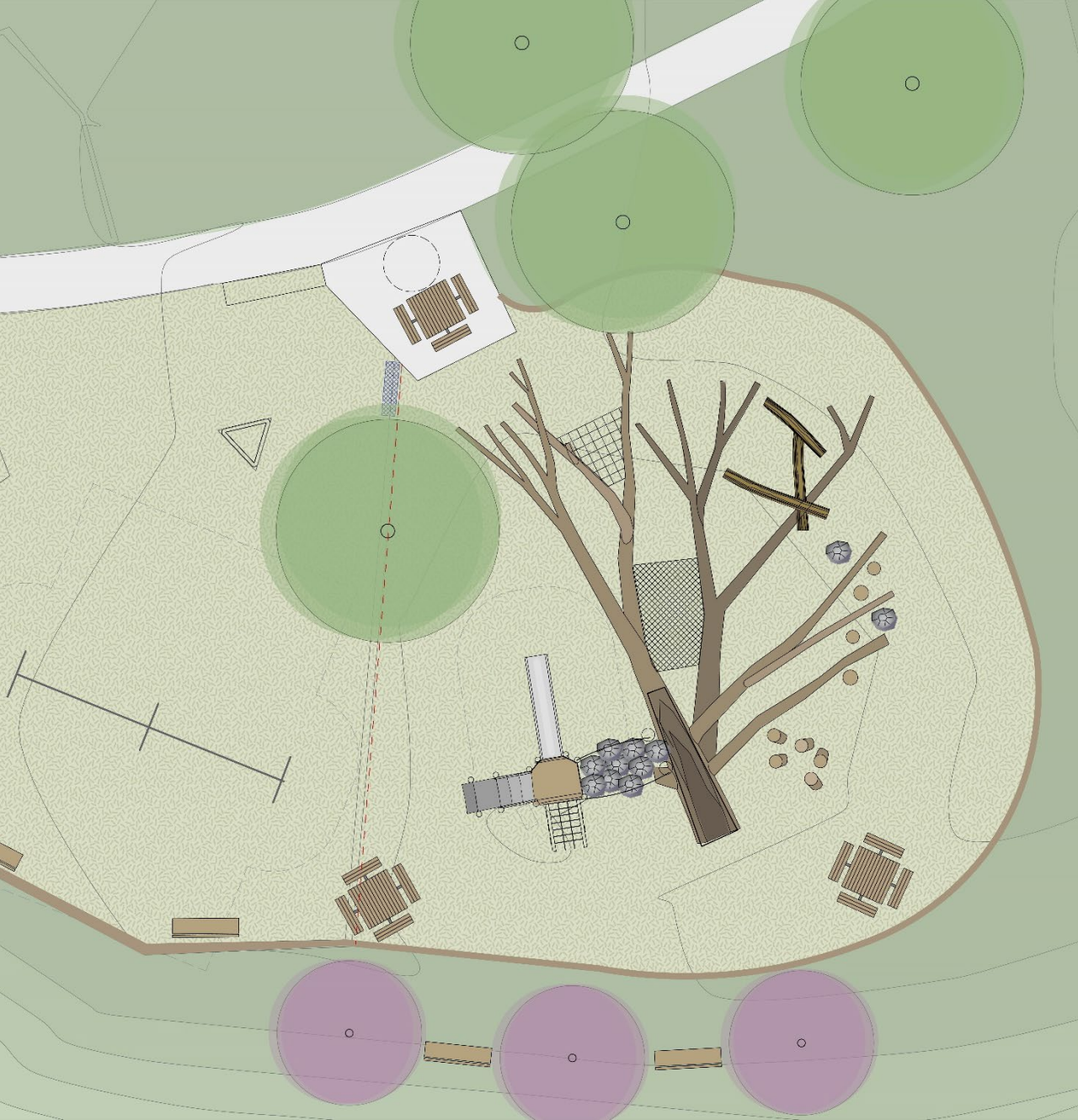
- Aging oak had to come down due to **poor health**.
- **Opportunity** to transform rot-resistant tree branches into a playground, honoring the tree and adding value to the site
- The playground has been popular with a wide range of ages.



## Why nature playgrounds?

- Provide a connection to the environment and allow for open-ended play
- Have been shown to encourage more active play and lead to extended playtime compared to traditional playgrounds
- Can still be designed to meet all accessibility and safety standards





## 02

### Proposed Design

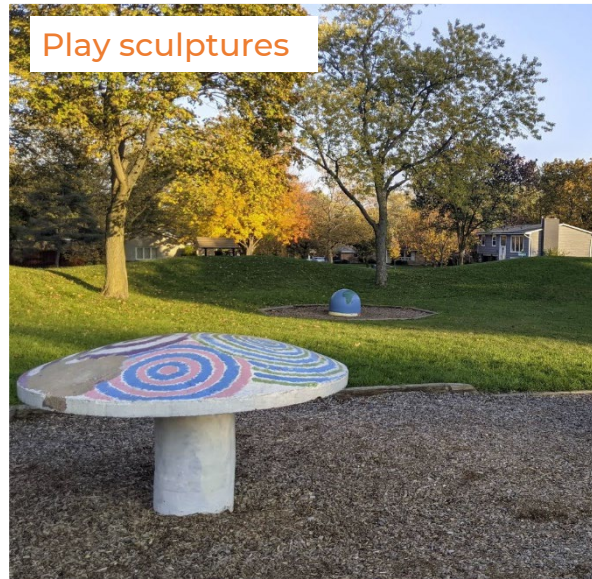
What will the nature playground look like?

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- Treehouse concept
- Flexible design to accommodate design-build nature of the project. Images represent ideas, but final design may or may not incorporate all of them.
- Barton tree had solid trunk and more height to branches. Given rotted core of this tree, the trunk has some constraints, and the branching is more horizontal than vertical.

## Existing Playground

- Traditional playground (incl. swings, slide, monkey bars)
- Play sculptures (incl. mushrooms park is named after)
- Signature hills



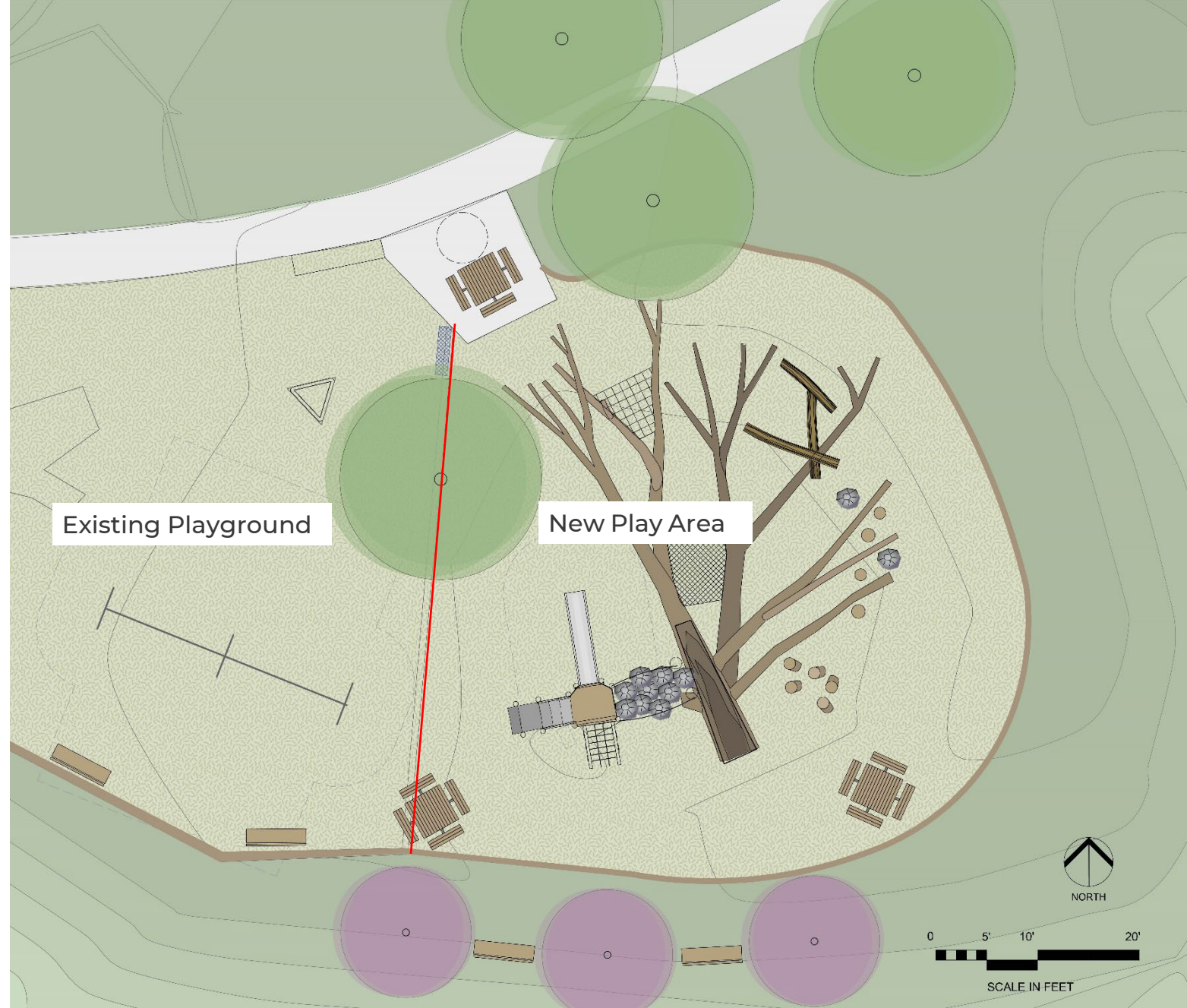
# Proposed Design

## Play elements include...

1. Stump treehouse
2. Boulder scramble
3. Branch “log jam”
4. Vertical climbers
5. Nets

## Additional amenities include...

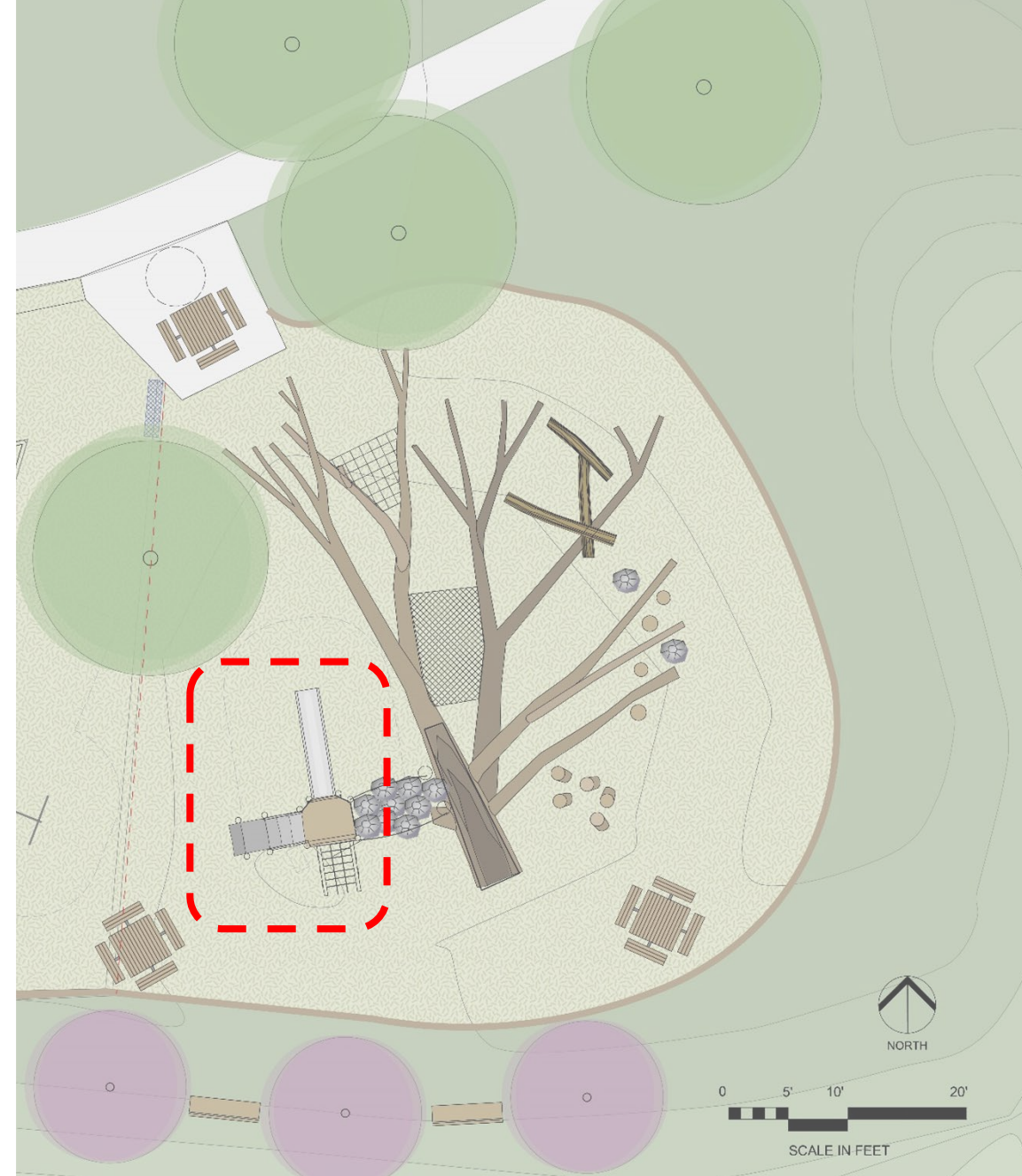
- Shade trees
- Picnic tables & benches



## Proposed Design: Elements

### 1 Stump Treehouse

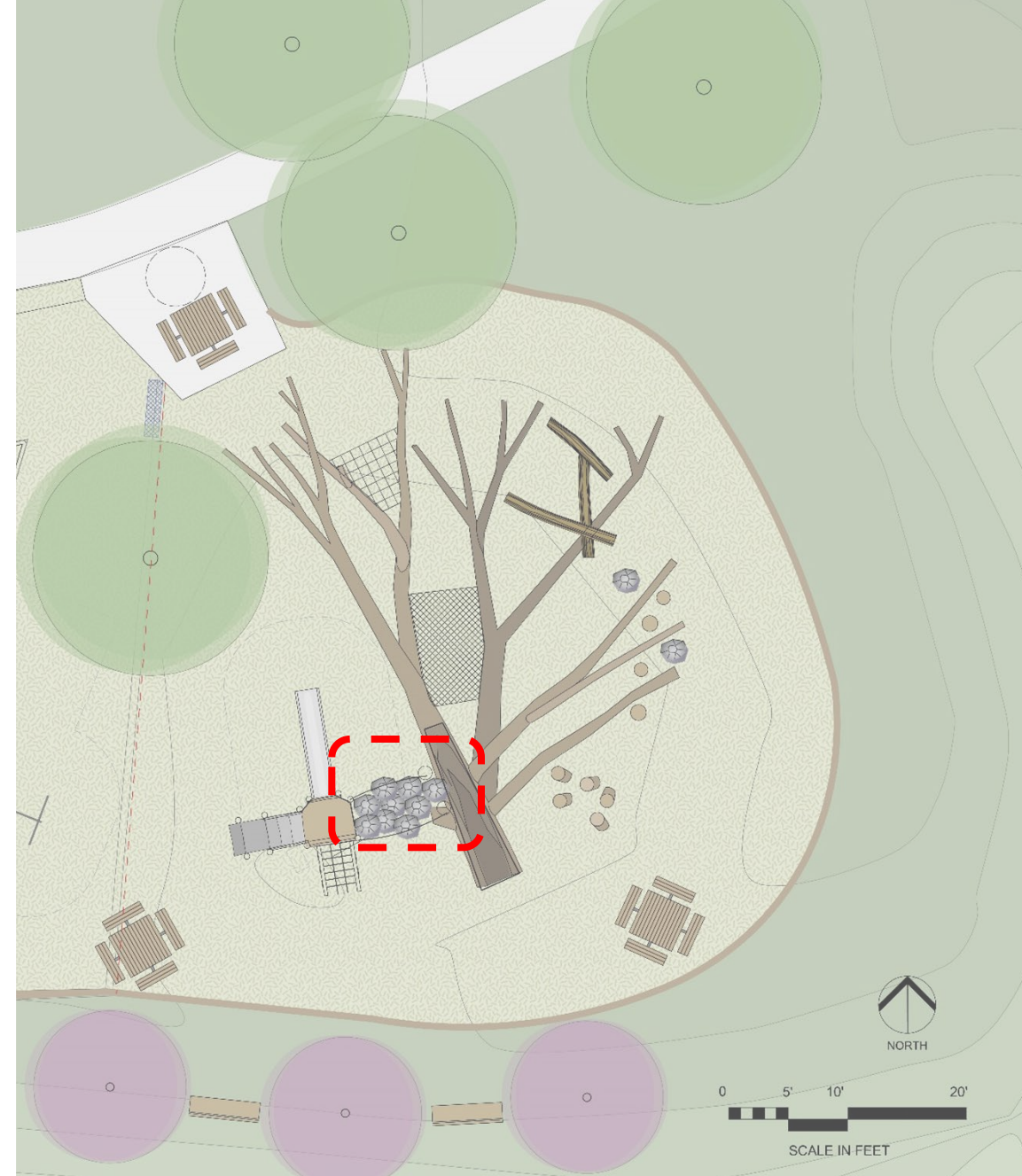
Use oak tree stump to create a climbable treehouse-style platform with multiple ways to climb up and a slide to get down.



## Proposed Design: Elements

### 2 Boulder Scramble

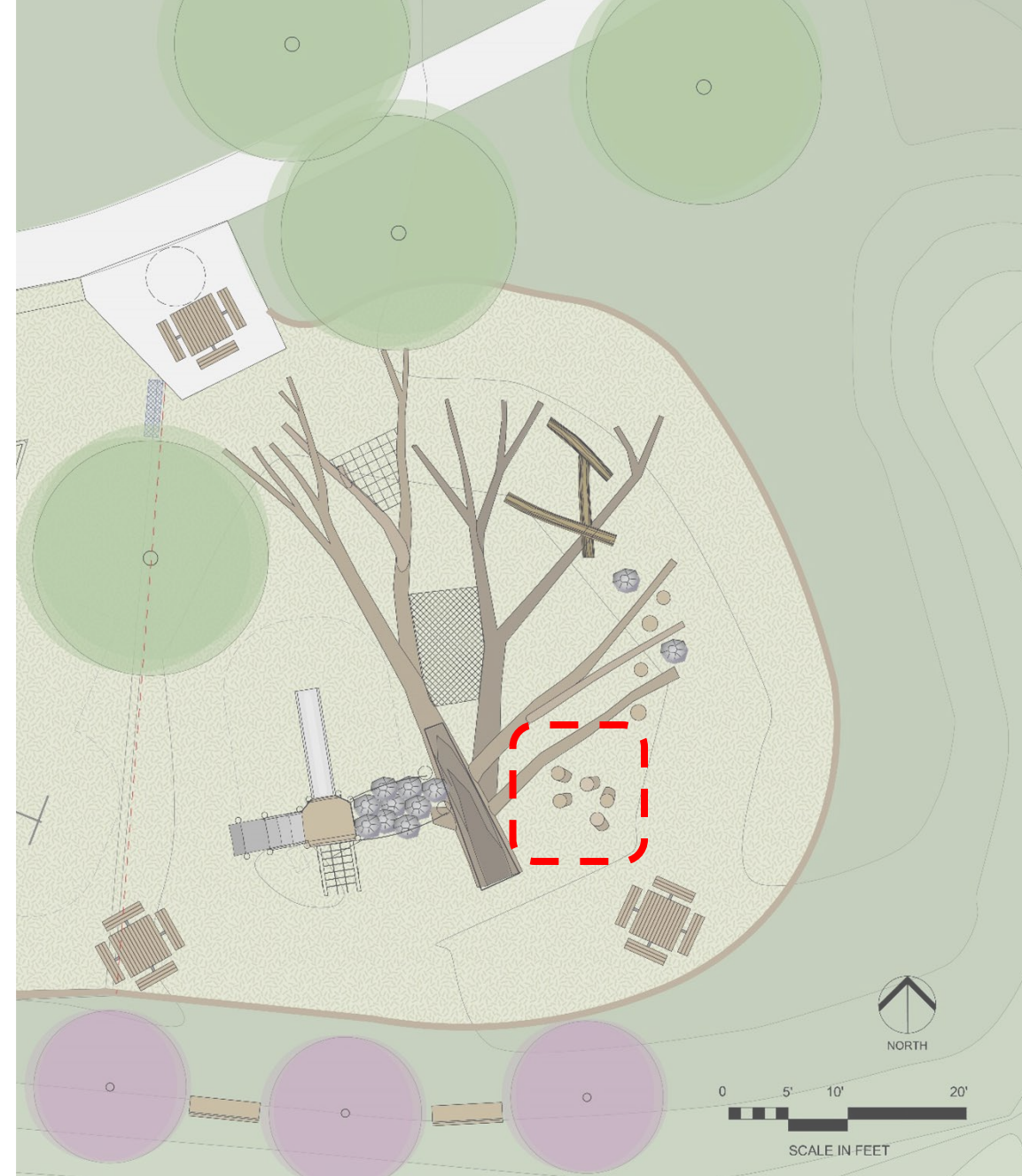
Connection between stump and main tree trunk will be with scramble path made of boulders, with roping for assistance.



## Proposed Design: Elements

### 3 Vertical climbers

Group of upright wooden poles with hand and foot holds for climbing.

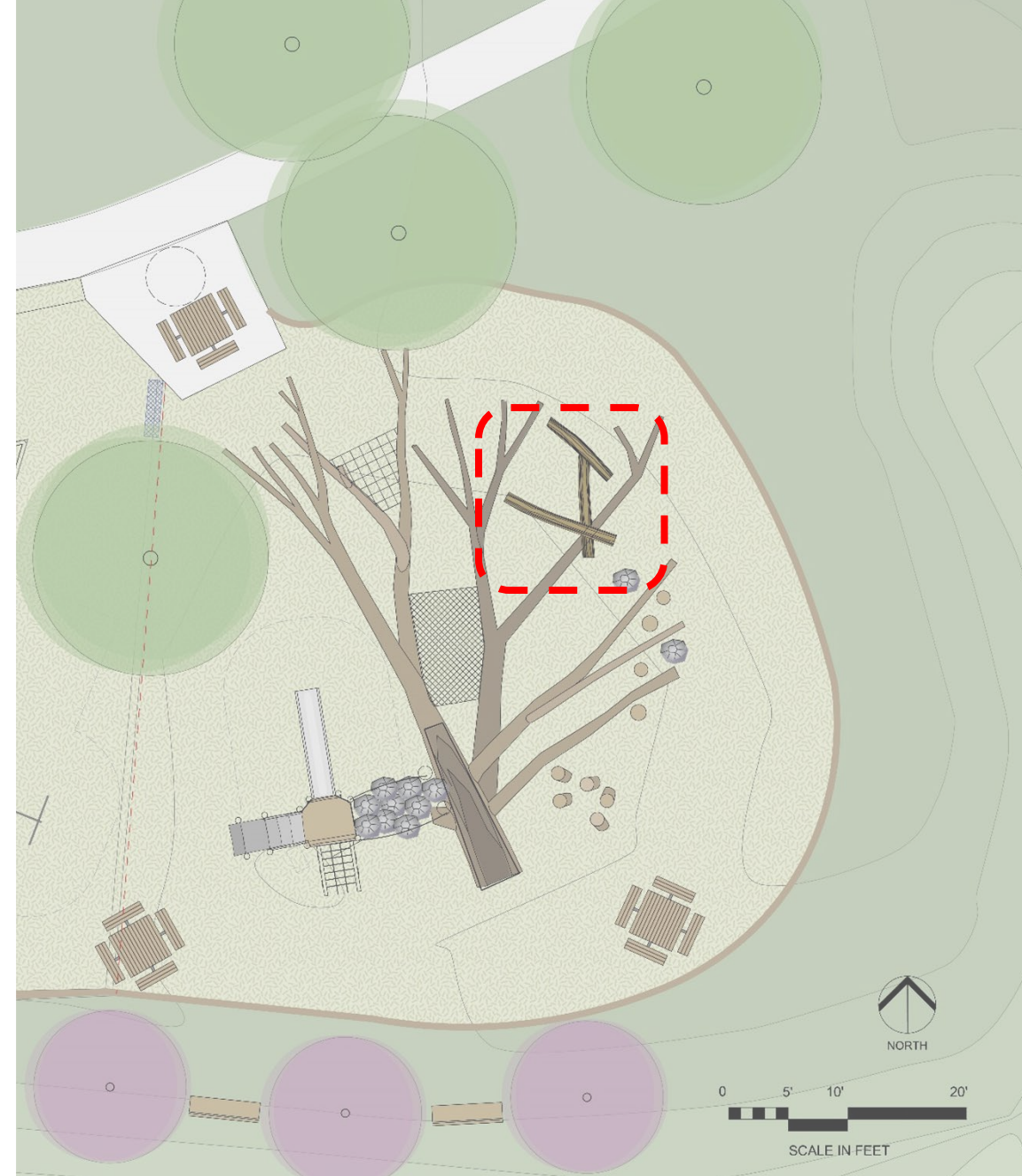


## Proposed Design: Elements

### 4 Branch “log jam”

Use large branches of oak tree as horizontal climbers.

Won't have the same height as Barton Tree but will work to create some climbing opportunities.

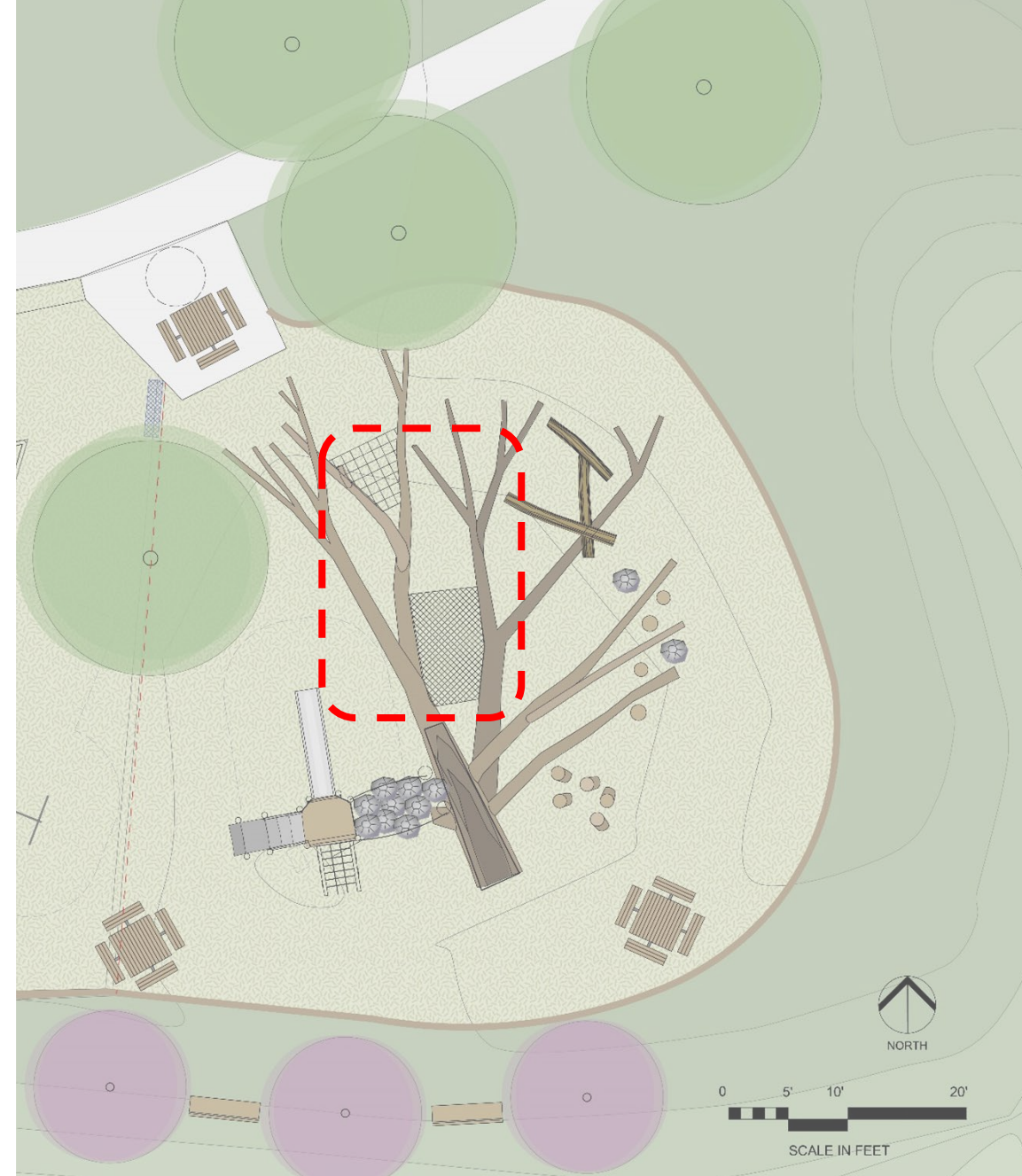


## Proposed Design: Elements

### 5 Nets

Rope nets for vertical climbing and as horizontal “hammock” hangout areas.

Will wait until branching structure is in place to determine netting opportunities.

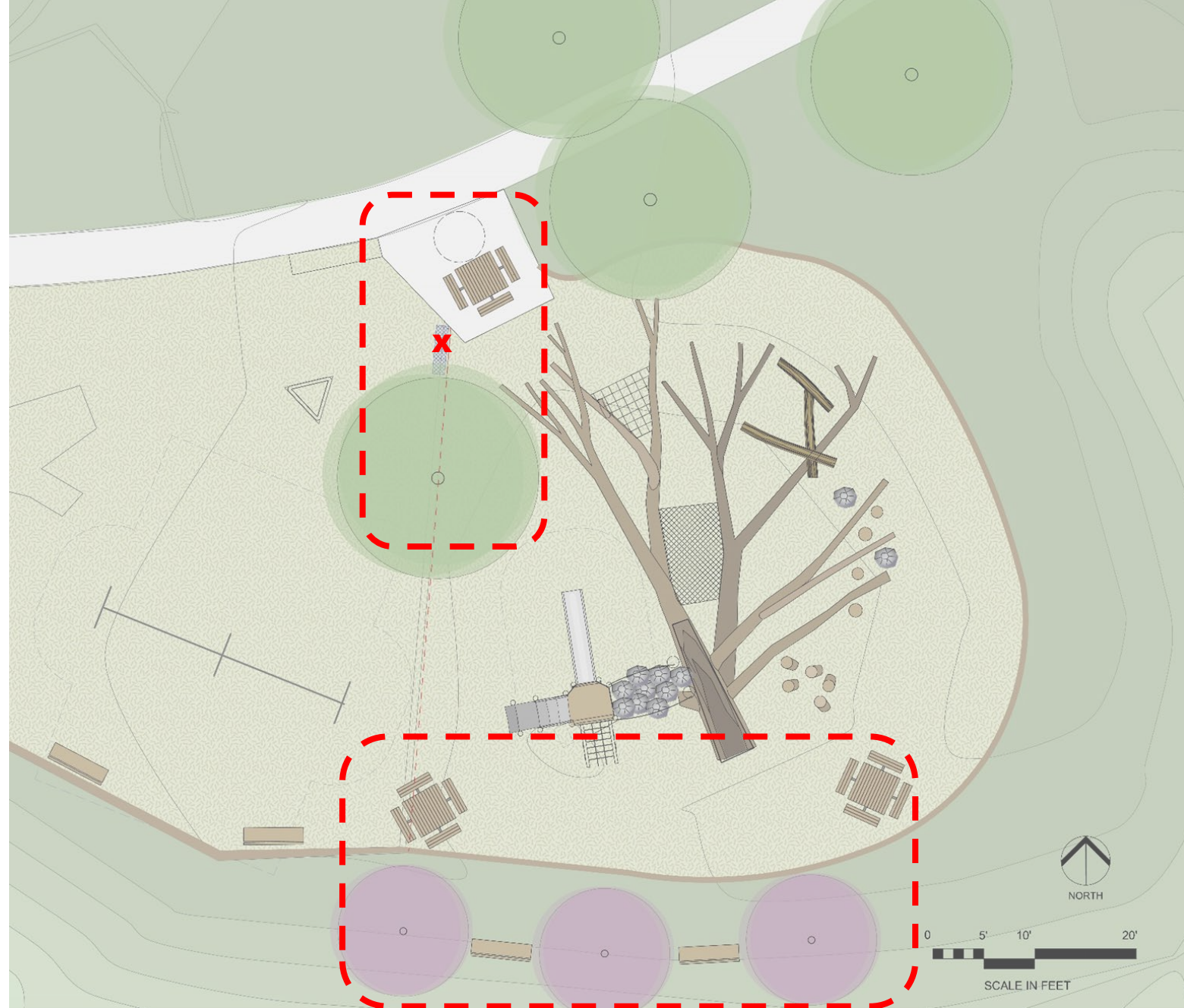


## Proposed Design: Elements

### 6 Additional seating and trees

Additional benches and picnic tables (including one accessible table) will be added to nature playground, along with trees for shade in the periphery of the play area for caregivers.

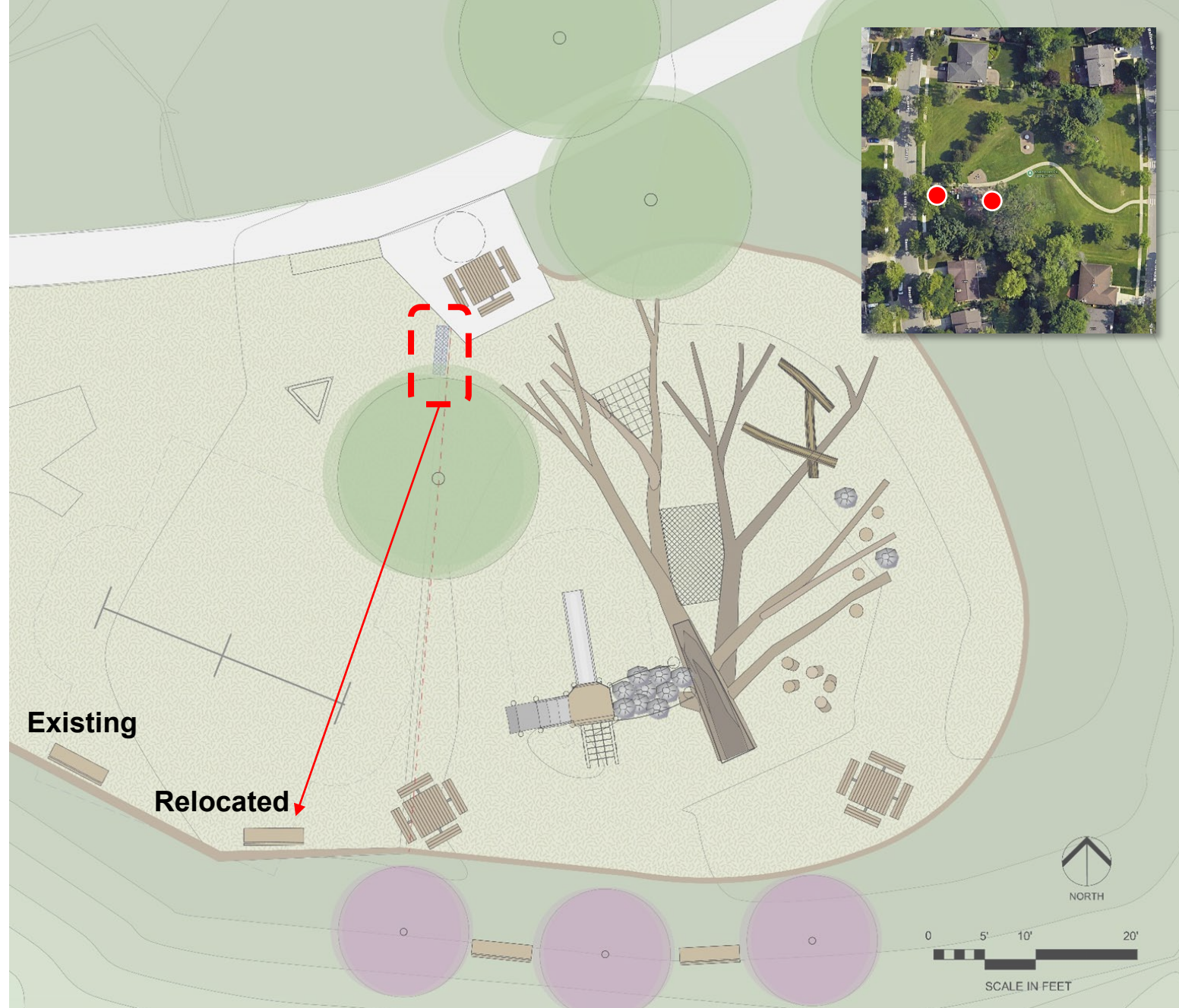
Existing bench along east side will be relocated to south end of existing playground.



## Proposed Design: Elements

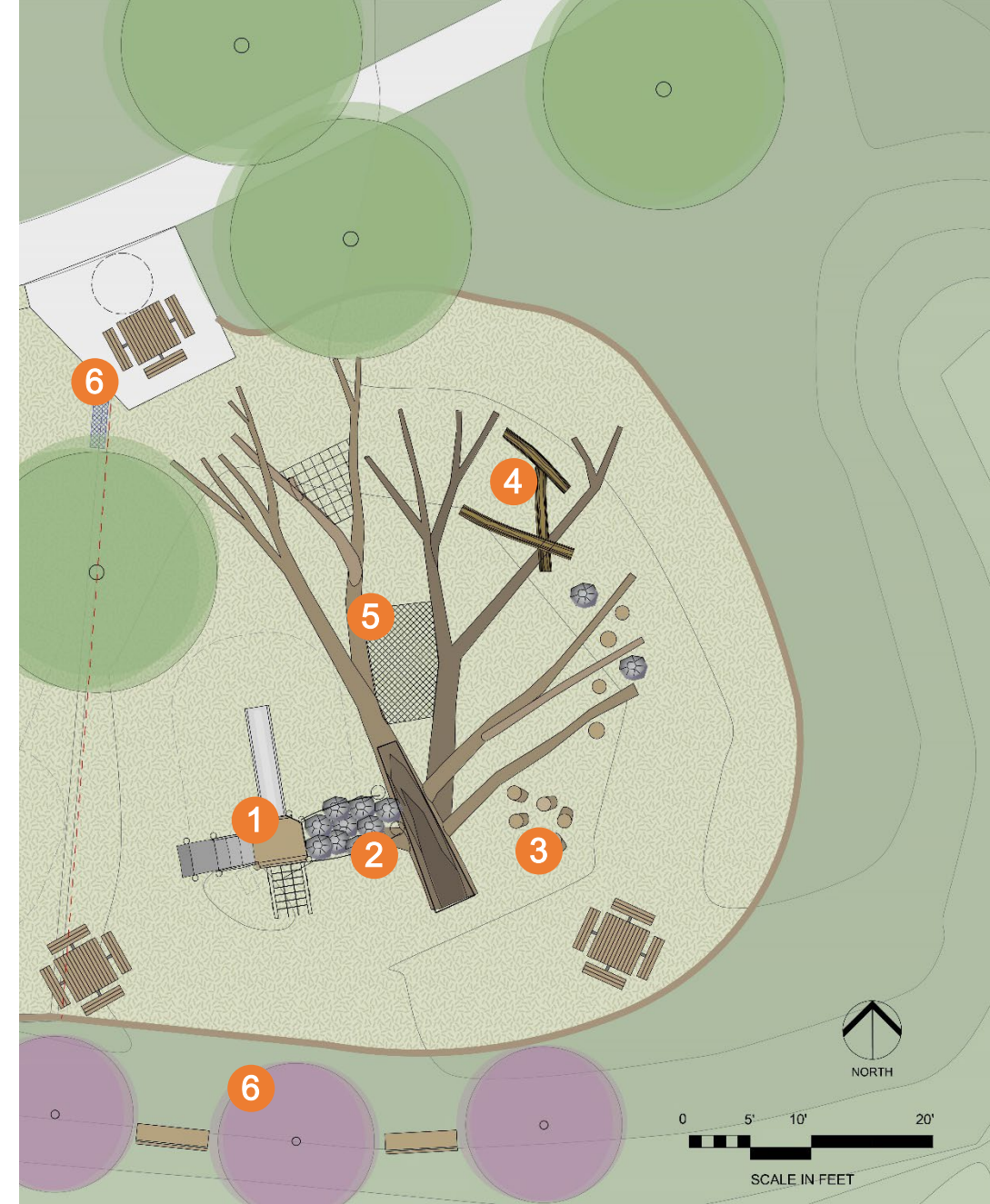
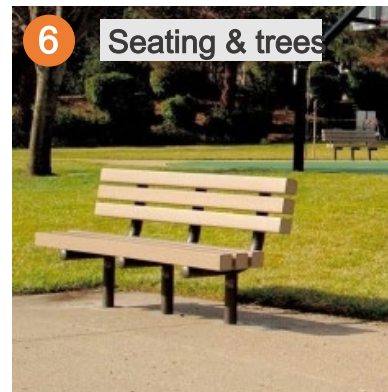
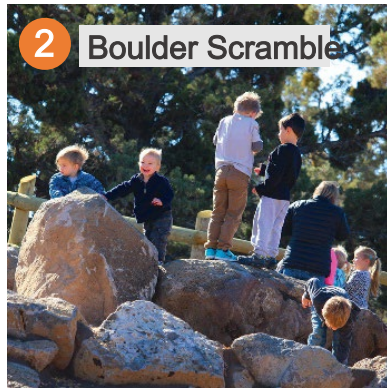
### 6 Changes to existing seating

- Relocate playground bench to perimeter
- Remove and replace picnic table at West entrance



# Proposed Design

*Questions?*



## Proposed Design: Tree Planting

### Current Conditions

Elizabeth Dean Fund Support

New White Oak planted in anticipation of large tree coming down

New Tulip Tree planted also for fast-growing shade

Wanted to leave rest of the park flexible until tree was felled and playground design was finalized.



## Proposed Design: Tree Planting

### Proposed Locations

Elizabeth Dean Fund Support

Interested in additional tree planting in park

Opportunities to add shade to path and playground

Seasonal interest

Want to balance tree canopy with open sunny lawns

Minimize maintenance burden with berm hills



# Proposed Design: Tree Planting

## Proposed Locations

East Sidewalk

Shade sidewalk and frame park entrance

### Potential species:

- Honey-locust (*Gleditsia triacanthos*)
- Fall color
- Fast growing
- Dappled shade
- Low maintenance



# Proposed Design: Tree Planting

## Proposed Locations

### Park Path Flowering Trees

One to three flowering trees along path for moment of spring color

#### Potential species:

- Pagoda dogwood (*Cornus alternifolia*)
- Tolerates wet soil



# Proposed Design: Tree Planting

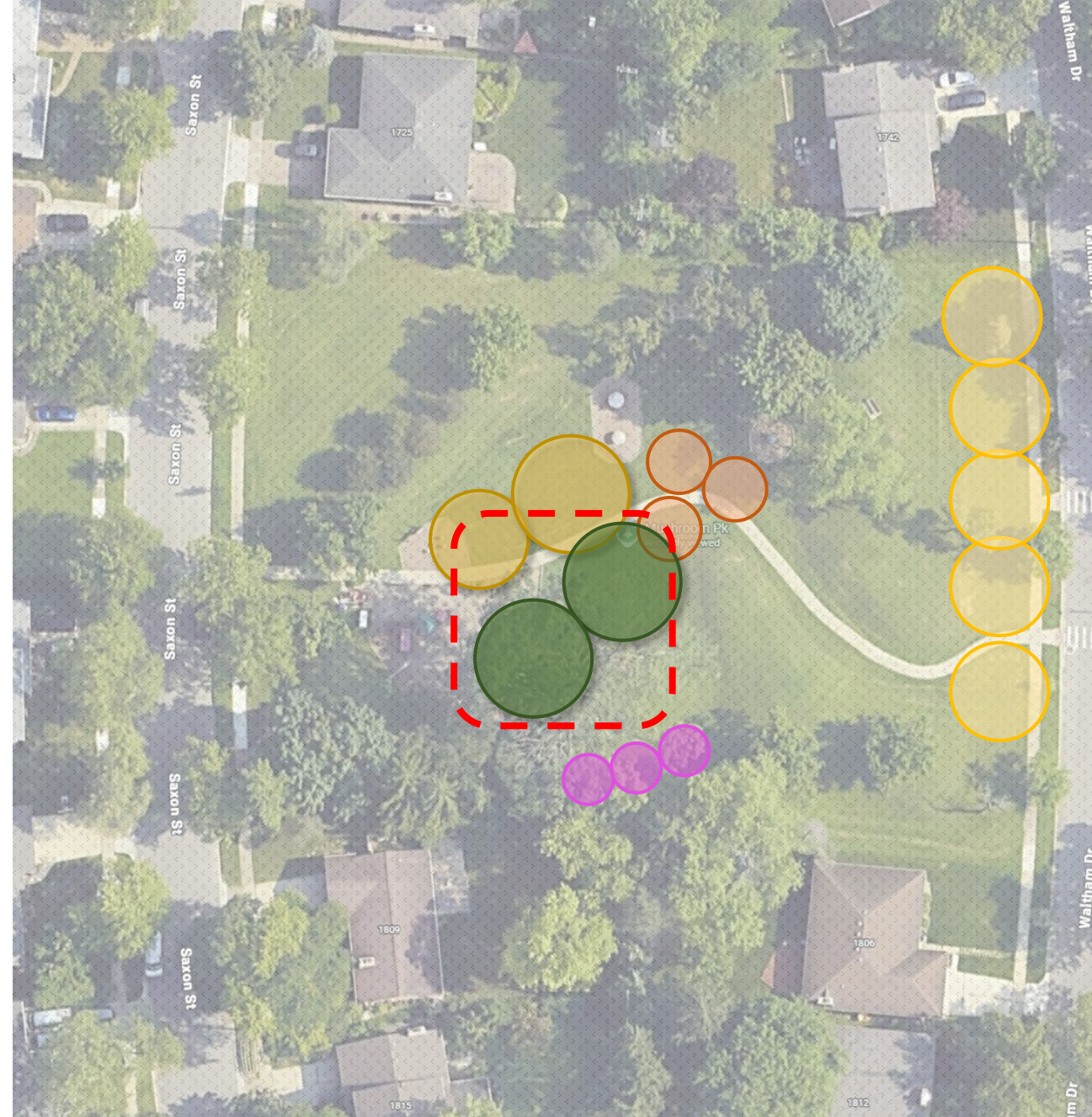
## Proposed Locations

### Playground Shade

Two large canopy trees for playground shade

#### Potential species:

- American sycamore (*Platanus occidentalis*)
- Tolerates wet soil conditions
- Fast-growing
- Open canopy with dappled shade
- Exfoliating bark provides winter interest



# Proposed Design: Tree Planting

## Proposed Locations

Flowering Trees at top of mound overlooking playground.

### Potential species:

- Flowering dogwood (*Cornus florida*)
- Eastern redbud (*Cercis canadensis*)
- Understory trees that tolerate some shade from existing trees nearby.





Allmendinger Park Playground

# 03

## Next Steps & Discussion

What comes next?

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- Construction on playground is anticipated to begin in May and is expected to last approximately 1 month. Some tables and benches may be delayed.
- Tree planting will likely take place in the fall.
- Project updates will be posted on [Engage.a2gov.org](https://engage.a2gov.org) and on social media.



# THANK YOU

for your time

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To stay tuned on this project, scan code or visit:  
[engage.a2gov.org/mushroom-park-oak-tree](https://engage.a2gov.org/mushroom-park-oak-tree)

