SOUTH SIDE PARK MASTER PLAN

The South Side Park Master Plan tucks 40 new or renovated elements into the 65-acre park, keeping roughly the same balance of woods and open areas as the current park does — which was important to community members.
South Side Park is a municipal park that benefits from a strong, capable friends group. The master plan breaks the City's work into three phases and identifies a stand-alone set of projects for the community to tackle. Restoration occurs continually.
Bandi Schaum Community Garden, in operation since 2012, sits below the plateau. The master plan introduces a canopy walk linking to trails at the plateau top and offering views above the gardens and towards downtown Pittsburgh.
Community members identified a need for gathering space for outdoor music or food truck events. The stone amphitheater set into the hillside takes advantage of the park’s topography. An open-air pavilion with restrooms unites the stage area and adjacent plaza.
The 21st Street entrance at the park’s lowest point would open onto richly planted stormwater wetlands and an accessible boardwalk. These would replace the paved drive and parking area there currently, offering an inviting green corridor into the park.
DISCOVERY GARDEN AND BASKETBALL COURTS

The existing entrances to South Side Park are almost invisible; they do not read as a park. The master plan proposes relocating basketball courts close to the 18th Street entrance and replacing an off-the-shelf playground with a discovery garden.
In the latter part of the 19th century and into the 20th, South Side Park was the site of coal mining and brick-making. This 1910 photograph looking towards the plateau shows what is now the park, here devoid of vegetation.
The plan takes advantage of existing flat areas -- whether due to rocky outcrops or earlier grading done for buildings, sports fields, and parking areas. Steep slopes are kept wooded, water is detained in wetlands, and trails are threaded through.
A walkshed analysis centered on South Side Park was overlaid with recreational amenity service areas as defined in the City’s Open Space Plan to identify needs that new program in the park could meet.
FOREST ASSESSMENT
Five randomly-generated plots encompassing 1/10th of an acre each were sampled using the UFORE (iTree-Eco) field data collection model. Canopy cover (shown above), dominant invasive species, and forest health were also assessed and mapped.
Today more than half of South Side Park is covered in second-growth woodland. Rocky places like the plateau offer long views towards downtown. This model made the park topography legible – and tangible.
GETTING THE WORD OUT

The project team used novel ways to spread the word about the planning process. In addition to posters and mailers, vinyl stickers were placed on park entrance signs and coasters with the planning schedule were distributed to local bars.
COMMUNITY EVENTS

Monthly planning events were held at the rec center in South Side Park. Advisory Committee and community members staffed the events alongside the design team and City Planning. Activity stations offered varied ways to give input.
Community events had five to eight stations where participants could share their thinking about the park. One station asked them to map the route they usually took through South Side Park.
Each community event presented new information and design options for the park and asked participants to complete a survey. The same survey and drawings were available online in the weeks after the event for those who couldn’t attend.
Printed copies of the Master Plan were given to City departments, neighborhood groups, and local libraries, as well as all members of the Advisory Committee. It is also available on the City’s website at http://pittsburghpa.gov/dcp/projects/south-side-park/index.html