

Windom Road Historic Barrier Park



Introduction

After the Civil War, Captain W. A. Bartlett, officer of a black regiment, bought acres of property just north of Washington D.C and parceled out the land to sell it to future homeowners. The land farthest from the Anacostia River was sold to white homeowners, later to become the Town of Brentwood. The land closest to the Anacostia River, prone to frequent flooding, was sold to the black soldiers of Bartlett's regiment. They later established the Town of North Brentwood.

These patterns of segregated homeownership established a divide between the two towns. In the era of segregation laws, residents of Brentwood worked to keep their black neighbors from North Brentwood from entering by making it a *sundown town*. In 1957, a barrier was placed on Windom Road to physically reinforce the divide.

Today, segregation laws have been removed from the country's political structure. Additionally, the demographics of the two towns has been changing as more Latino residents move in (Washington Post). And still, the barrier stands, reminding residents of a divided past.

Sundown town: all-white municipalities or neighborhoods in the United States that practice a form of segregation by enforcing restrictions excluding people of non-white races via some combination of discriminatory local laws, intimidation, and violence.

From *Sundown Towns: A Hidden Dimension of American Racism* by James W. Loewen

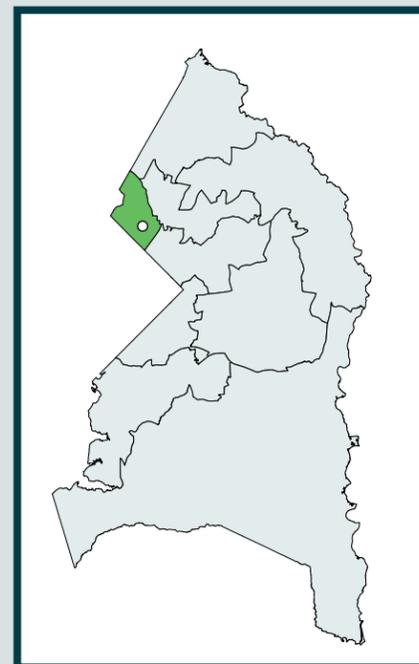
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The two towns are working together to change the narrative of the past in how they interact in the present. The Neighborhood Design Center was invited by the Mayors of Brentwood and North Brentwood to re-imagine the look and experience of the barrier at Windom Road. Through the course of designing, the scope expanded to more holistically consider how to create a place activated by the redesign of the barrier. After providing landscape recommendations for the barrier and park, NDC and the two towns recognized an opportunity to share and make more relatable the history of both towns through creative signage.

Through a design workshop with residents, the signage parameters were established and further refined through rounds of feedback with the core project team, which included the towns' leadership and Prince George's African American Museum and Cultural Center.

This document outlines the final schematic plan for Windom Road Barrier Park. It includes landscape recommendations for Windom Road, the barrier, and the adjacent park as well as the signage frameworks established cooperatively.



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The Towns of Brentwood & North Brentwood

Windom Road Historic Barrier Park

Introduction

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Project #: 3095
15 August 2018

Process

Initially, NDC was tasked with improving the look of the barrier at Windom Road and suggesting a sign to help better share the history. It became quickly apparent that separating the function (which was to remain) and the history (which needed to be made public) was necessary for success. The scope expanded to include depaving an existing street and making connections to a nearby park.

1/ Initial design concept

In Fall 2017, NDC produced a phased concept based on meetings with key stakeholders. The design considered landscape improvements, signage options, road treatment, and stormwater best management practices.

Outcome: creating a shared stakeholder vision and priorities for the project and demonstrating the need for broader community engagement strategy.

2/ Community design workshop

In December 2017, NDC led a workshop with local leaders and residents, which included George Denny, local historian and former Mayor of Brentwood. Participants shared their own life journeys and collaborated to identify signage look, feel, and content. In the workshop, local leaders of both Brentwood and North Brentwood, defined the signage and content they wanted to see for the project.

Outcome: establishing design & content priorities for historical content, honing in on the appropriate aesthetic of project signs.

3/ Stakeholder conversations

In addition to designing concepts and workshops, NDC continued conversations with various stakeholders: PGAAMCC, North Brentwood Historical Society, and various leaders and staff in both towns.

Outcome: clarity in expected outcomes, exploring connections between the barrier and PGAAMCC programming, building consensus for project.

Internal research resources

Lowen, J.W. (2005) *Sundown Towns: A Hidden Dimensions of American Racism*. New York, NY. The New Press

Denny Jr., G.D. (1997). *Proud Past Promising Future: Cities and Towns in Prince George's County, Maryland*. Brentwood, MD. George D. Denny Jr.

Morello, C. & Wiggins, O. (2011). North Brentwood's uneasy shift from black haven to Hispanic destination. *The Washington Post*. Retrieved from <https://wapo.st/2EYiLw5>

Judy Barsalou and Victoria Baxter, "The Urger to Remember: The Role of Memorials in Social Reconstruction and Transitional Justice," *Stabilization and Reconstruction*, no. 5, (January 2007), United States Institute of Peace.



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Design Process

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Design Guidelines

Design Guidelines are principles that steer design decision-making. For the Windom Road Historic Barrier Park, questions were asked that ensured holistic consideration was given to the experience of potential users throughout all elements of the design—signage, landscape, and historic content.



Who is the audience and do they know about the project?

Defining the audience through profiles according to level of interest/knowledge, point of arrival to the site, and how that frames interactions and takeaways at the site.

What are paths for interaction between the space and the audience?

Creating points of interaction with distinct signage content and landscape recommendations at each of the project sites.

What are the content and design frameworks for each space?

Designing a framework to share unique historical content at each site. Finding ways to connect local history with broader, societal trends in history.

Design for all people

Make information accessible to the audience by considering universal design principles, translating materials into Spanish, and clearly laying out a hierarchy in the text.

Tell the story through signs

Attract visitors to experience the history displayed in the park. Find thematic or sequential narratives that recognize lived experiences and how race played a role in the history of the place.

Make it interactive

Design ways users can engage and interact with the signage. Think about how users will connect with the space.



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User Experience

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The audience

These potential audience members represent people who may interact with the project sites. Their perspectives and needs are essential to consider in designing the project signage.

	Passing by the area	Young visitors	Residents	Enthusiasts
Areas of interest	Learning new things Exploring new areas Being curious	Learning to grow Prioritizing fun Being playful and curious	Learning about the towns Connecting with neighbors Enjoying the area's amenities	Learning the details of history Contributing to the stories Spreading the word
How do they arrive?	Planned trip to the area Driving or walking aimlessly Stumbling upon the site	Directed to the site Playing in the area Strolling around the area	Walking around the area Growing up in the area Moving into the area	Planned trip to the area Meet-up with local enthusiasts Reading up on the site
Takeaways	Knowledge of the area Connection to larger trends in history	Connecting classroom and local history at the site Identifying the trends in history to the local experience	Understanding the roots of the community Establishing visions and comments for the future	Collecting details of the history Establishing visions and comments for the future
Possible interactions	Quick pass through the site Following the prompts of each sign	Using it as a tool for education Using the signs for identifying place and significance	A place to meet neighbors & family Walking through it quickly Following the prompts of each sign	Following the prompts of each sign Contributing to the stories Serving as site-keepers
Time spent	Short & quick Long & reflective	Short & quick Long & directed by someone Stopping to play	Passing by quickly Stopping to learn more	Long & reflective Directing people around



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Audience Profiles

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Types of signage

Keeping potential users in mind, signage typologies define the qualities for signage design at several locations. At each site, signs play a distinct role in the telling the story of the Towns of Brentwood and North Brentwood past and present.

Type 1: Town Signage

- Capture special moments, figures, and places in the history of the two towns.
- Use the signs to lead audience to the main site design at the barrier and around the town.

Type 2: Park Signage

- Engage audience with creative and varied sign designs.
- Highlight larger trends in history that defined the segregation of the two towns.

Type 3: Barrier signage and experience

- Explains the history of the barrier at the actual site.
- Opportunity to activate with programming from PGAAMCC
- A space to reflect on the history, and how to work towards unity between the two towns.

Historical content

The nature of different sites— from frequency of use to time spent there — are considered when choosing can be used to support telling different aspects of the history.

Individual: Everyday anecdotes

Small signs around town elevate notable sites and figures around both towns, present facts, showcase personal stories, and make relatable connections to history.

Trends in society: Placed-based segregation

Signs in the park will reflect on past experiences of segregation nationwide, present data on place-based discrimination, and consider the evolution of these trends both locally and nationally.

Community: Segregation with a physical barrier

Recognize and articulate the shared and divided history of the two towns and how it led to building a barrier on Windom Road and articulate a commitment to a shared future.



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Signage Concepts

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Type 1

Town signage

Fun and curiosity around both towns

Each town has specific places with history and town signs are an opportunity to showcase quotes, anecdotes, and other historical facts.

Content - Everyday anecdotes of the towns

- Short snippets of history and lived experiences
- Connect sign elements back to the barrier site
- Quotes from people who can comment on the history or experience of living in the towns
- Highlight significant people in history
- Community-elevated history and everyday life

Areas of interests

- Exploring new places around town
- Being playful and curious
- Learning details of local history
- Creating a sense of community

Takeaways

- Knowledge of the area
- Understanding the roots of the community
- Viewing familiar places through a new historical lens



Materials

- Composite or metal sign with cutout
- Wood or metal post

Notes

- Opportunity to show old photo and view to present day
- Focus on places to highlight

Qualities

- Eye-catching
- Playful
- Fun and engaging shapes
- Creative signs link with identity of the Gateway Arts District
- Size and shape variable depending on the content on each of the signs.



Materials

- Composite or metal sign with cutout
- Wood or metal post

Notes

- Place for text, QR codes to connect to additional information
- Explains elements or places

Time spent

- Passing through quickly
- Stopping to learn more

Size 3' tall maximum



Materials

- Composite or metal sign with cutout
- Wood or metal post

Notes

- Sculptural cutouts commemorate people and events simply and visually

Town Signs can start simply.



Inspiration: the One Mile Radius Project, www.1mileradiusproject.com



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Signage for Towns

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⊕ Type 2 Park Signage

Linger and learn about historical trends at the park

The existing park offers an opportunity to enhance quality of life in both towns by creating a unique and welcoming gathering space. With direct sight lines to the sculpture proposed for the barrier location on Windom Road, an opportunity is created for signage to comment on larger systemic conditions that gave rise to sundown towns and place-based segregation. Due to the space

Content - Place-based segregation

- Show the data trends of place-based segregation
- Highlight definitions, statistics, and/or quotes
- Explain present-day trends and aspire about the future
- Create a bright and creative environment for picnicing and gathering

Areas of interests

- Learning new ways to look at local history and national trends
- Being playful and curious
- Enjoying the area's amenities

Takeaways

- Connection to larger trends in history
- Establishing visions and comments for the future
- Beautify existing public space



Materials

- Painted wood cut-outs
- Polycarbonate sign and wooden post (inset)

Notes

Opportunity for collaboration with local artists to create signs that are as visually appealing as they are educational.

Qualities

- Interactive
- Fun and playful
- Sculptural
- Mix and match signage options



Materials

- Composite or metal sign with cutout
- Images directly applied to sign body
- Rotating inset

Notes

With the rotating inset, one sign can include historic content, future thinking, text, and photos.

Time spent

- Passing by
- Stopping to play
- Long & reflective

Size 3' - 5' tall



Materials

- Metal pier with images directly applied
- Decorative concrete or etched stone groundplane

Notes

Include one space with decorative concrete and two, vertical metal signs around the barrier.



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Signage for Park

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Type 3

Barrier signage and experience

A procession across the town line

A sculpture replaces the historic traffic barrier at the center of Windom Road. Park space on either side tells the history of each town. Stories of the barrier and its effect will be read while passing through the sculpture and crossing the town line. A single, shared path represents both Towns' commitment to a future without divide.

Content / A physical barrier to segregate

- Brings to light history of the traffic barrier—why it was installed, what it meant to both North Brentwood and Brentwood
- Contains stories and quotes from people about the barrier
- Prompt questions challenge people to aspire a future without divide
- Concrete floor design shows timeline of the two towns leading up to 1957 when the barrier was placed on Windom Road

Areas of interests

- The history of segregation in Prince George's County
- Being playful and curious
- Learning about the towns
- Learning details of local history

Takeaways

- Knowledge of the area
- Understanding the roots of the community

Notes

- A portion of the former barrier highway barrier will be housed at the PGAAMCC in their permanent collection.



Qualities

- Iconic, sculptural feel
- Includes combination of text and maps with prominent titles and imagery
- Both sides of the sculptural structure activated with content
- Considers ADA accessibility and translation to Spanish
- Lighting options possible
- Designed by a local artist

Materials

- Metal with images directly applied
- Images on surface-mount panels

Size 8'H x 8'W x 8'L

Time spent

- Short & quick
- Long & reflective

Paving tells the story

- Turning onto Windom Road from 39th Street, a person's feet will notice a change, from wide, smooth street to a narrow, bumpier paving. Trees line the narrower path sides and bloom bright pink in spring.
- The path widens leading up to the sculpture and inset bands of concrete create a timeline of Brentwood history.
- Nearing the sculpture, the path narrows and timeline bands disappear. Set in a decorative concrete carpet sparkling mosaic-like in the sun, the sculpture stands prominent. Overhangs create a sense of enclosure and compression, echoing the discomfort and tension felt by residents of North Brentwood when crossing the barrier for so many years.
- At the center of the sculpture, a concrete band highlights the original barrier location.
- The timeline history of the Town of North Brentwood is laid out on the other side of the sculpture and an asphalt path leads to an improved park with picnic areas and bright signage.
- Alternate "fast paths" allow cyclists and pedestrians moving at a quick pace to pass around the sculpture and not impede reflective contemplation.

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Signage for Barrier

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Overall Site Plan

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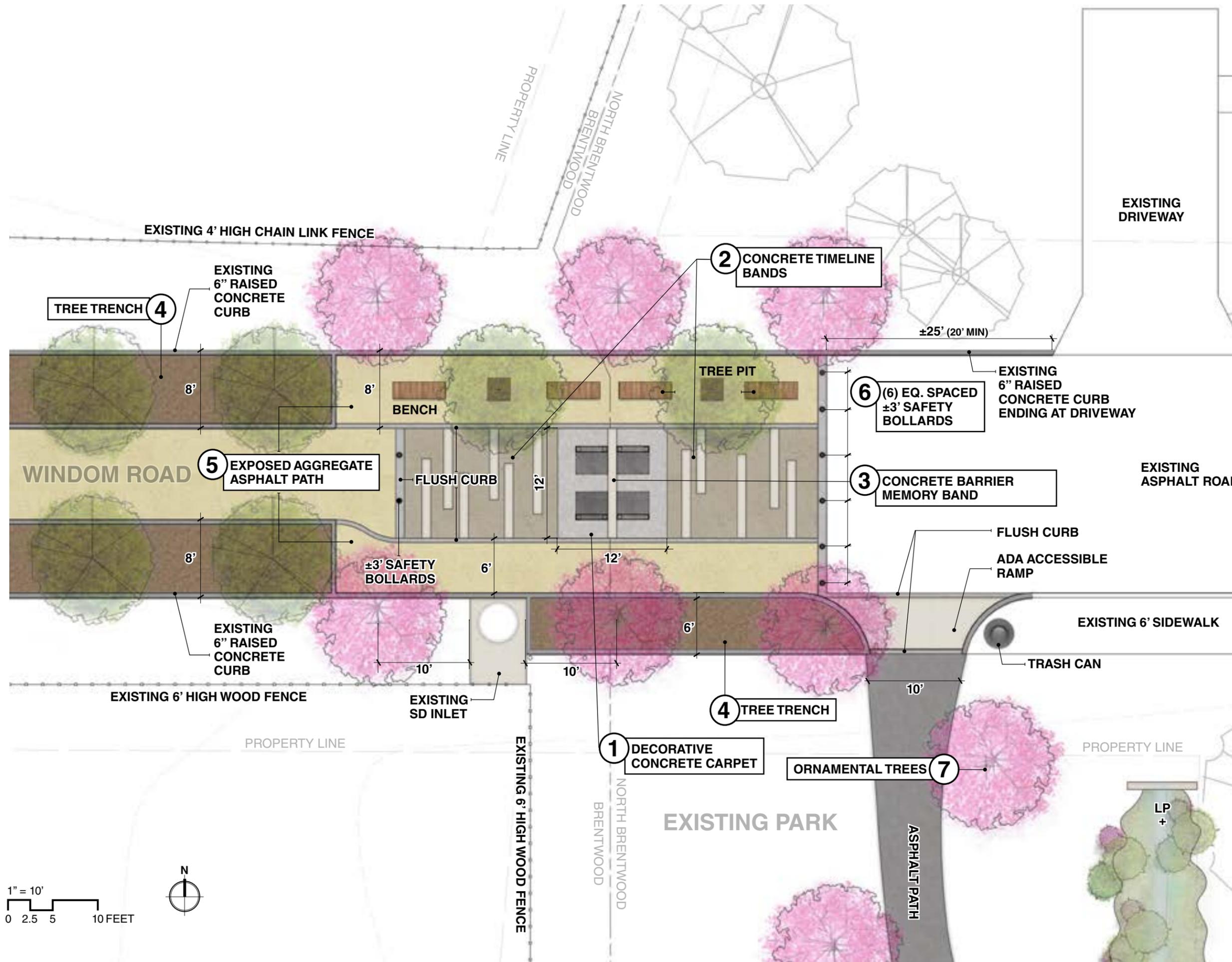


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Barrier Area Detail Plan

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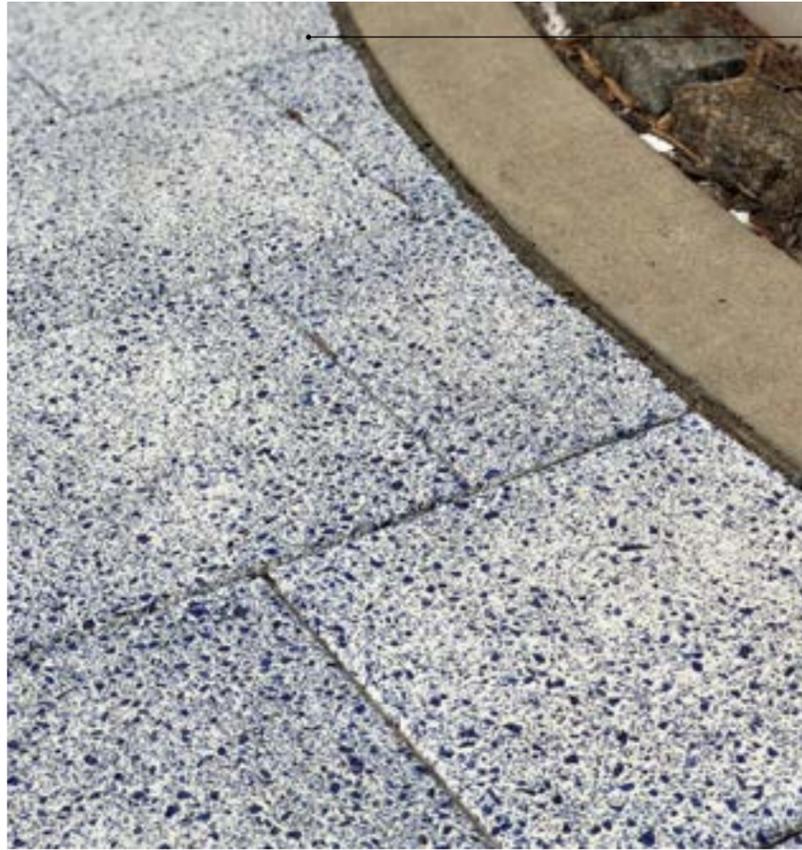
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Park Site Plan

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Concept Images



1 DECORATIVE CONCRETE CARPET

A square of sparkling concrete, just larger than the sculpture, acts as an anchor in the center of Windom Road and indicates of something significant is happening.

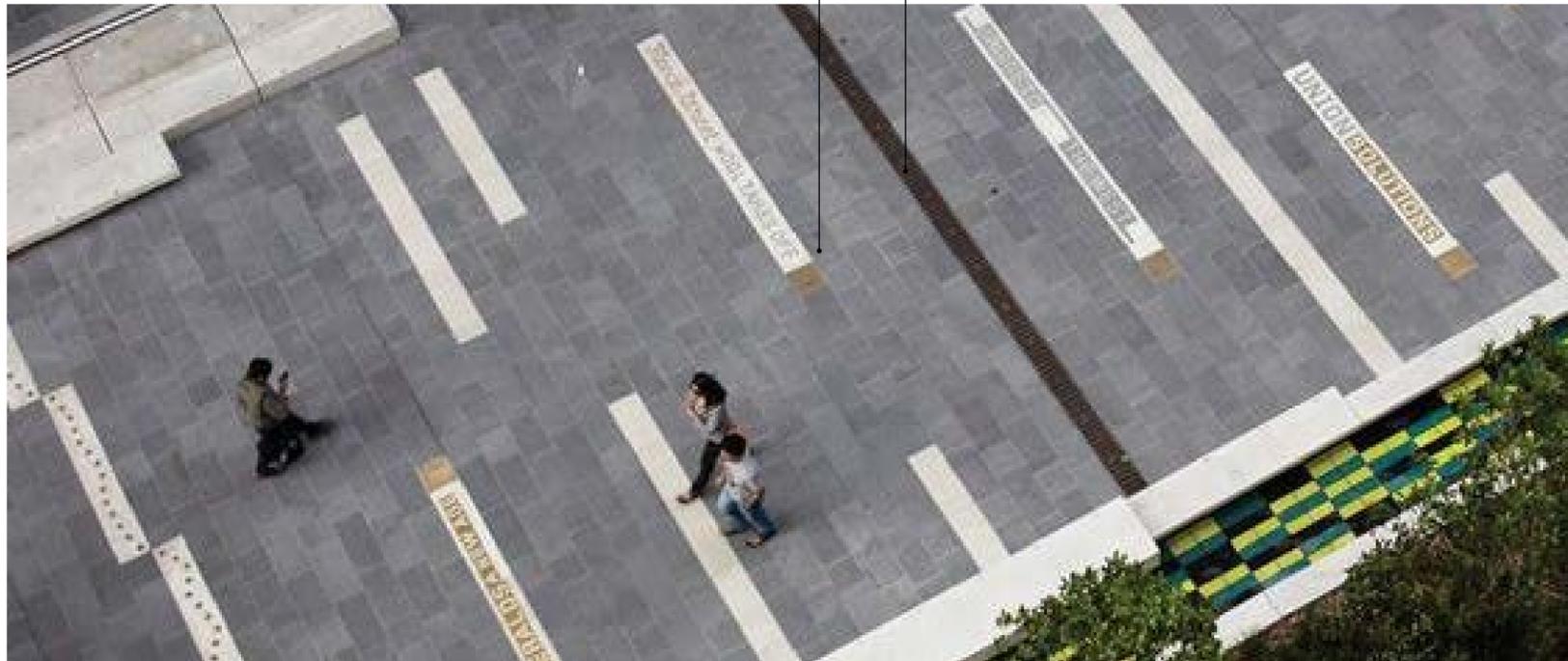
There are a number of ways to achieve the decorative and unusual effect desired, from scoring with a decorative pattern, to staining or even inlaying the concrete with pieces of colorful glass.

2 CONCRETE TIME LINE BANDS

Concrete bands on the barrier promenade commemorate the shared and individual histories of the two towns.

3 CONCRETE BARRIER MEMORY BAND

A concrete band will be placed at the original location of the barrier to denote its former location and the historic town line.



4 TREE TRENCH



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Concept Images



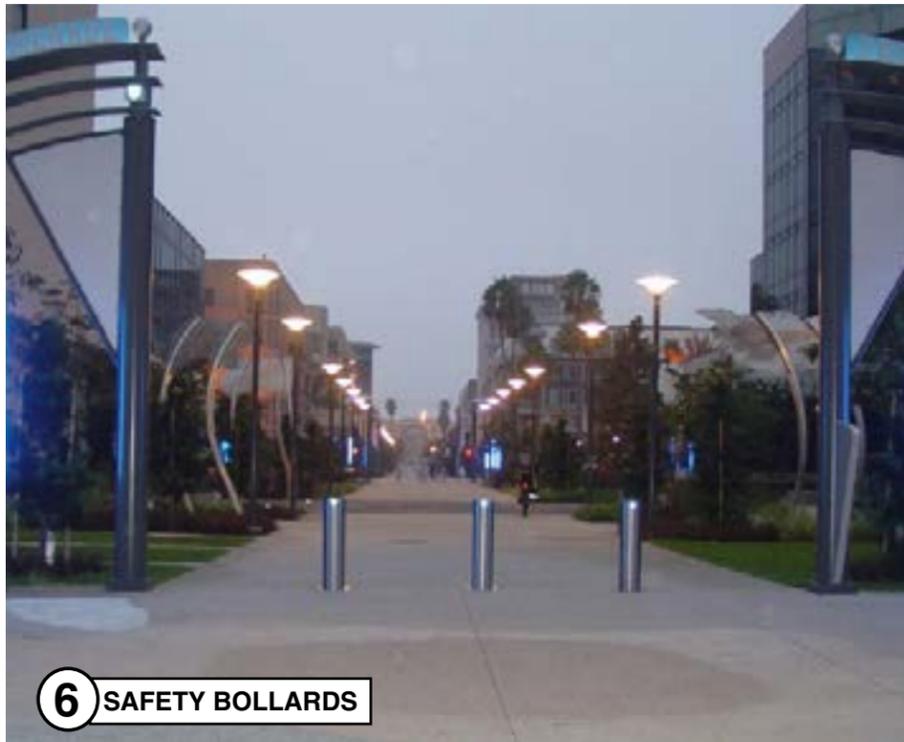
5 EXPOSED AGGREGATE ASPHALT PATH



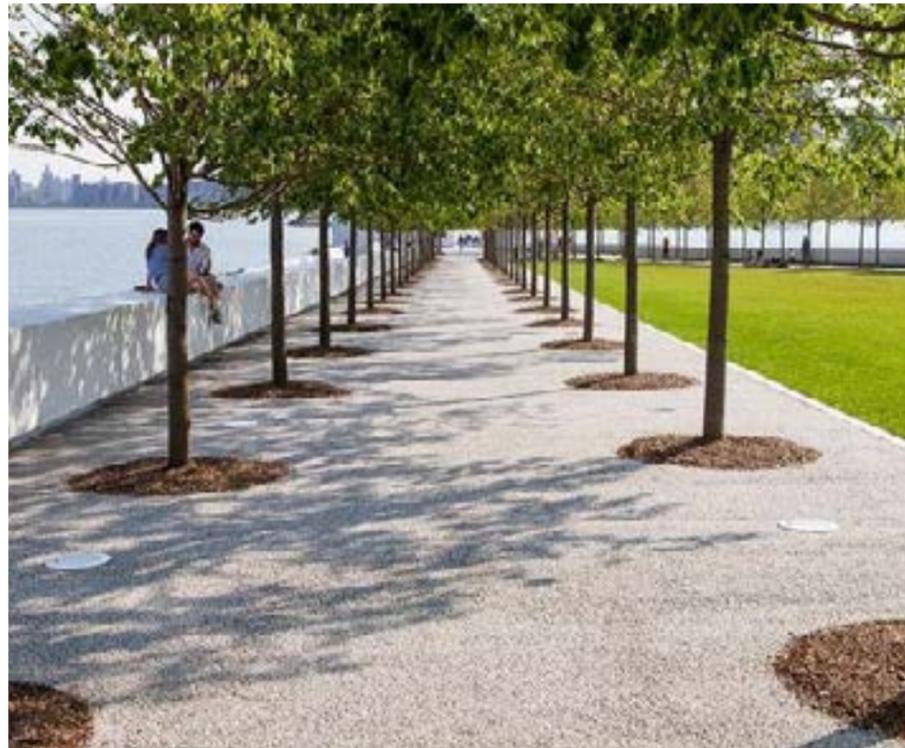
7 ORNAMENTAL TREES

Ornamental trees at the entrance to the park path and along the perimeter of the barrier park are landscape focal features. The trees welcome visitors into the space and frame the views in and out of the barrier park.

Eastern Redbud trees were selected for their bloom time, color, and occurrence in other parts of both towns. The tree's fuchsia-colored flowers appear in the spring, providing a bright contrast to the metal sculpture.



6 SAFETY BOLLARDS



8 ROW OF SHADE TREES

A row of shade trees, also known as a formal 'allée' of trees, are suggested on the west side of the site. The trees direct views to the sculpture and provide shade for visitors moving through the space.

Water-loving species like sycamore, elm, and river birch will thrive in the site and reflect the flood plain site conditions, a significant part of the place's history.



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Concept Images



9 BENCHES



10 PICNIC AREA

Picnic areas provide gathering spaces for residents to socialize and recreate. Each picnic area will have a concrete pad with anchored picnic table(s), grill and trash can. Picnic areas are ADA accessible so that all users are welcome.



11 IMPROVED PATH



12 FOOT BRIDGE

A small foot bridge serves as an alternative to a stormwater culvert located under an existing asphalt path. The stormwater culvert currently directs water from an asphalt stormwater channel to the storm drain on site. Transforming a portion of the culvert and channel into a bioswale creates a more appealing, safe and ecological path for the stormwater. The footbridge allows users to walk on the path over the bioswale.



13 BIOSWALE

A bioswale is a landscape element designed to help remove pollution and debris from stormwater runoff. This system slows down stormwater, preventing flooding and cleaning stormwater before it enters the sewage system. The drainage path is gently sloped on either side and planted with native vegetation. Installing a bioswale improves the stormwater infrastructure of the park while highlighting the area's flood plain history. It transforms a potential hazardous condition into an opportunity for environmental stewardship.



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**Concept Images
(cont'd)**

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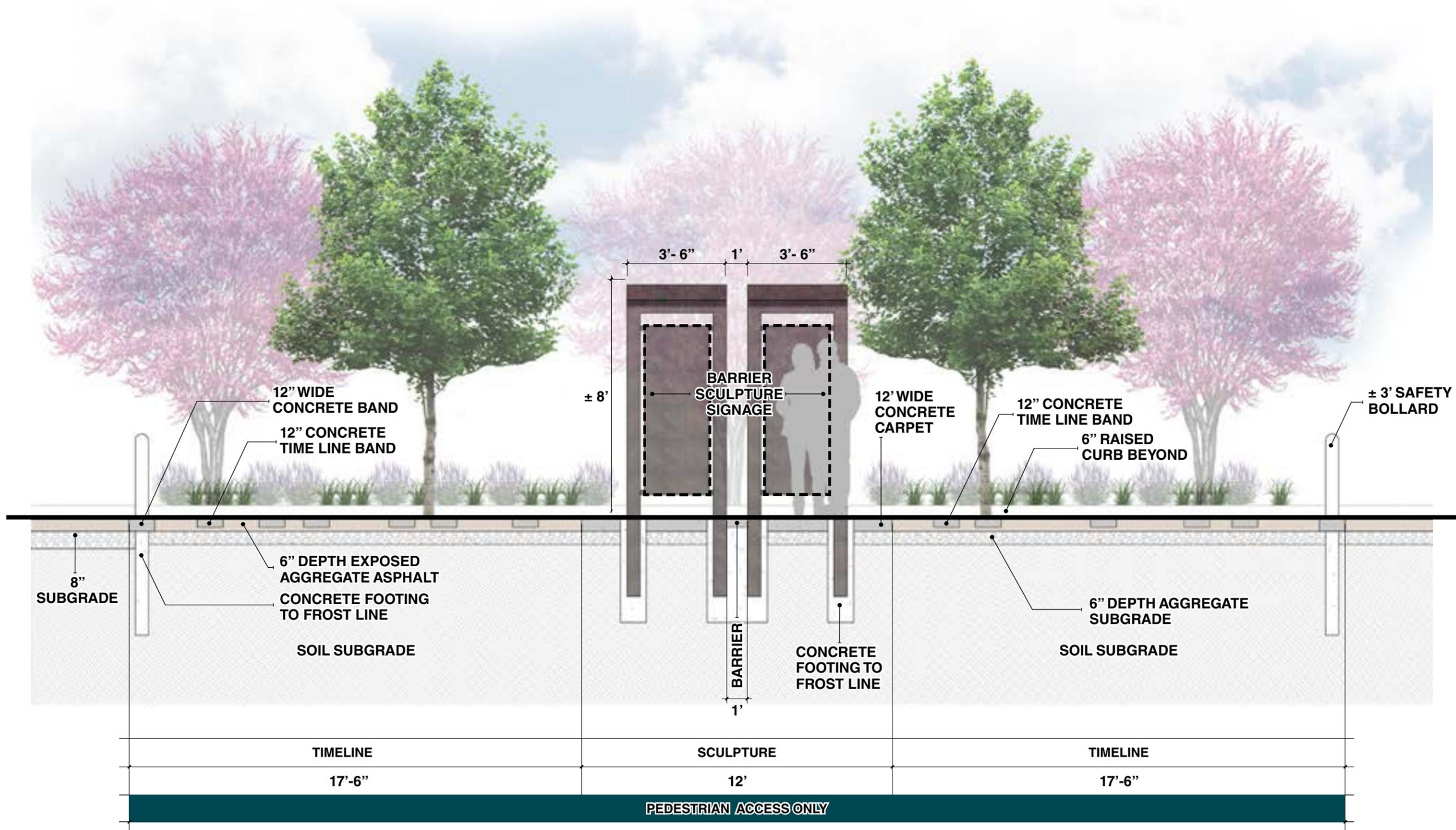


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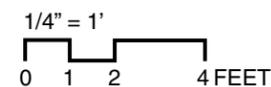
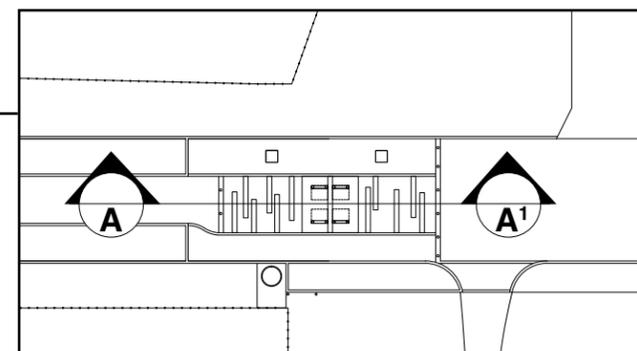
Barrier Section

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A BARRIER SCULPTURE

section facing north



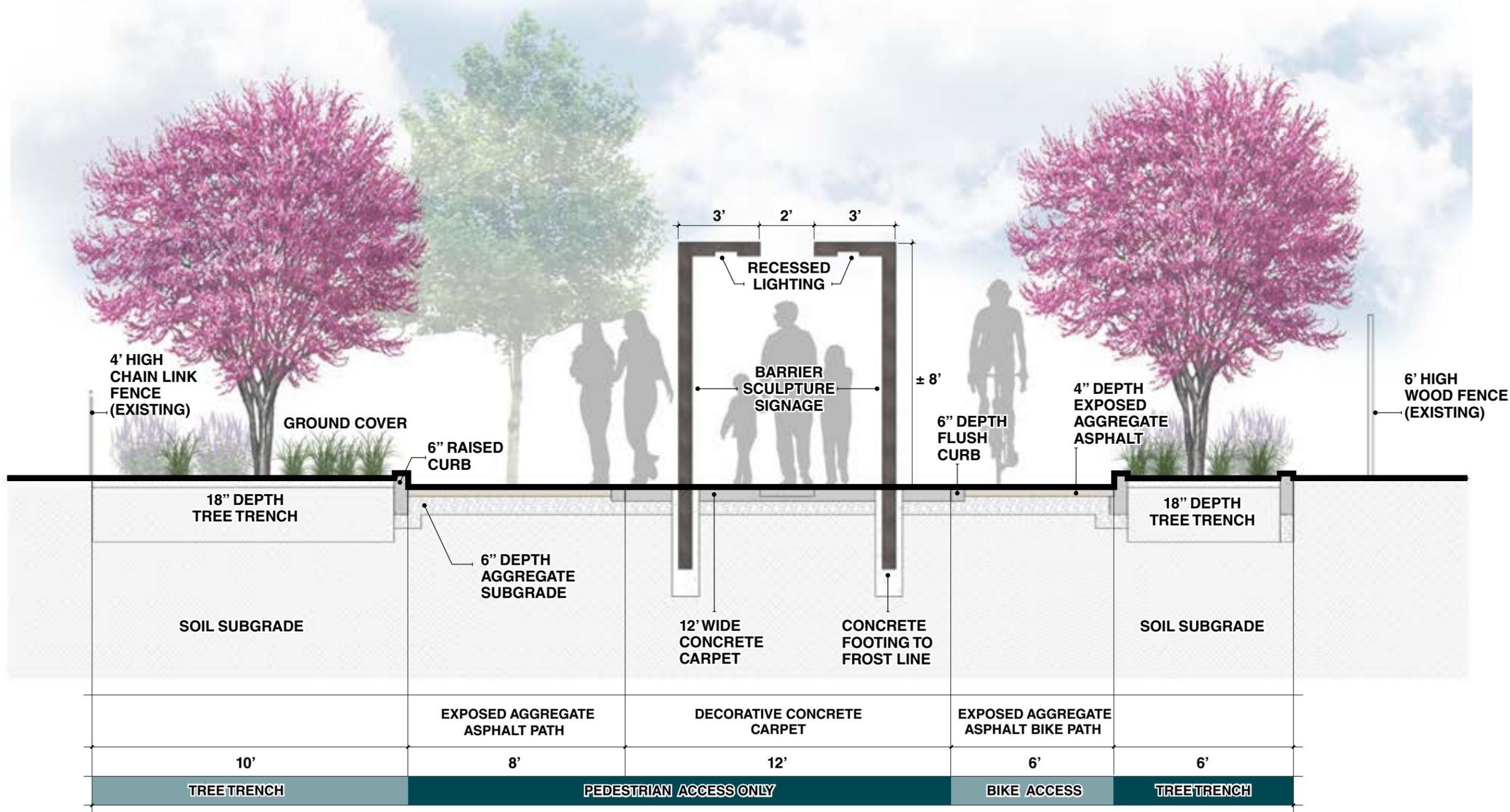


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Barrier Section (cont'd)

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B BARRIER SCULPTURE & PATHS

section facing west towards 39th Street

