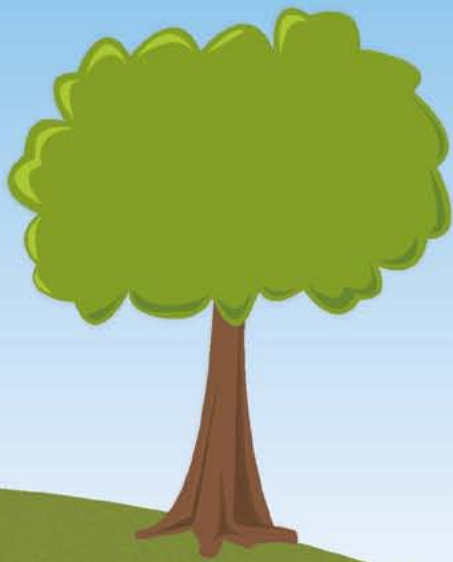


THE SOUTHWEST DISCOVERY PARK

...Where Community is Grown



Site Plan for the Former Franklin County Children Services Site
Southwest Area
Columbus, Ohio
Prepared by Kyle A. May

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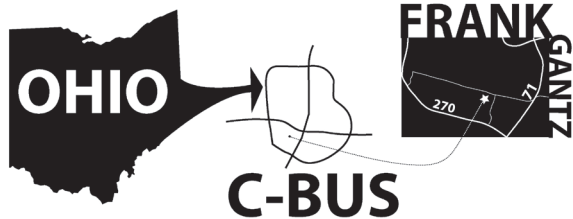
PART I: EXISTING CONDITIONS



THE SITE



The 77 acres slope gradually toward the two bisecting streams running through the site. Both Early and Big Run Creek have development easements restricting any potential development. Early Creek runs from the North to the south, splitting the site into an eastern and western portion. Big Run Creek flows along the southern border of the site. The map indicates the large amounts of residential uses surrounding the site, along with several industrial areas to the immediate east. The new Children Services building cuts into the northwest corner of the site. Tree cover is indicated by the darker green color, and makes up a large portion of the area. Residents of the area have set up small scale community gardening plots within the site and these are indicated on the map in yellow.



Location

The former Franklin County Children Services site is a 77 acre lot in Southwest Columbus. The site is bordered to the north by Frank Road, to the east by Gantz Road, to the south by Big Run Road and to the West by residential development. The site is included in the larger Southwest planning area and was mentioned in the recent area plan.

History

In 1951 the Franklin County Children Services moved their operations to the site and established the Franklin Village. This cottage arrangement of foster homes maintained the natural state of the site, and functioned there for 45 years. When the basic structure of foster care moved from this model to the current decentralized system, the site was abandoned. The remaining buildings were removed four years ago and the site is now maintained by the county, but with no real use.

Southwest Area Plan

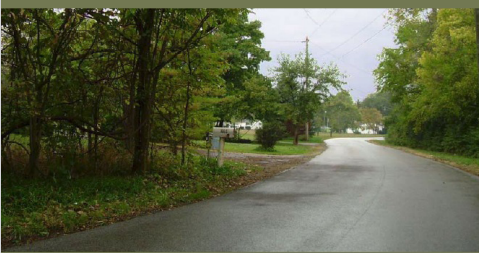


Fig. 1

The Southwest Area Plan

The Area Plan for Southwest Columbus provides a framework for growth and development within the area. The Plan and its various recommendations establish the area's needs, which mirror those presented by the stakeholders for the Children Services Site. The Plan itself establishes its own design for the site, and many of these ideas are incorporated into the Discovery Park.

Opportunity

Considering its prime location in the center of a large suburban residential complex, the area has potential for any appropriate development. The shape and focus of this development will have to depend on the community's needs as well as the requirements of the county. They've each made several recommendations that focus on three clear areas:

COMMERCE Desire for jobs, and tax revenue

COMMUNITY Enhanced access to the site as community resource and gathering place.

CONSERVATION/RECREATION Maintain the natural state of the site while allowing for appropriate recreation

Plan Formation

The design for this plan will incorporate the competing visions for the site into one unified, multi-purposed place. The seemingly conflicting uses will work in conjunction to support a vibrant and utilized addition. Working around these themes of Commerce, Community, and Conservation/recreation, the new Park will satisfy the stakeholders, encourage the community and support the county with tax revenue. The Southwest Discovery Park is a manifestation of these requirements, ideas, thoughts and desires.

Demographics

POPULATION	15,846
EMPLOYMENT	8,000 JOBS
LAND USE	28% RESIDENTIAL
POP. UNDER THE AGE OF 18	4,151

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PART II: THE PLAN



THE SOUTHWEST DISCOVERY PARK

MELDING THE THREE DESIRES PRESENTED BY THE STAKEHOLDERS AND COMMUNITY, THE SOUTHWEST DISCOVERY PARK IS A RESULT OF THOSE IMPORTANT THEMES. THE PARK SEEKS TO BLEND THOSE IMPORTANT FUNCTIONAL USES IN A UNIFIED AND RECOGNIZABLE SPACE. THE TERM "DISCOVER" REFERS TO THE ACTIVE NATURE OF THE SPACE AND THE MANY EXPERIENTIAL ELEMENTS FOUND WITHIN.



Commerce

The need for tax revenue and a commercial focal point requires a portion of the site be devoted to retail development. This growth, however, should be concentrated and acknowledge the larger park. The Town Center will blend the private and public spheres with a small square at its center, and a farmer's market to the south. It's important that this development turns its focus from the busy Frank and Gantz roads inward toward the square and the larger park.

Community

It's clear in the present community gardening effort that the residents of the area have a solid communal foundation to be built upon. The success of these gardens requires that any new design for the site should incorporate this idea and help foster its continued success. The Discovery Park will enhance community gardening and connect the process to the town center with the newly established farmer's market. The children of the area will be incorporated in a new Playscape. Differing from the typical playground, a playscape focuses on exploration and adventure. Finally, the Discovery park will host outdoor galleries of sculpture and art aimed at involving the community in the creative process. Works will be temporarily displayed along trails, gardens, and other key areas of the park.



Conservation and Recreation

It was clear in the recommendations that any plan for the site have conservation as one of its key tenants. The site, as it exists today, is beautiful. To destroy any portion of the well-established forest canopy would be unacceptable. Instead, development in the Discovery Park will focus on the northeast corner, leaving the natural areas undisturbed. The more passive western portion of the site will feature miles of hiking trails and forest re-growth areas. A one mile bike circuit will encircle the site, crossing the Early Creek in the North and South. Later phases will connect the park to greenways running along Big Run Creek and eventually Scioto trail.



COMMERCE

THE TOWN CENTER PLAN WILL BE LOCATED IN THE NORTHEAST PORTION OF THE UNDEVELOPED SITE. THE PLAN WILL ENCOMPASS ROUGHLY 6 ACRES OF THE 77, AND INCORPORATE BOTH PUBLIC AND COMMERCIAL BUILDINGS. ITS LOCATION WILL BE EASILY ACCESSIBLE AND SERVE AS A GATEWAY TO THE LARGER PARK.

Density

In order to preserve a majority of the site for the surrounding park, commercial development will need to be compact and limited to this zone. The county may address the issues related to parking by acknowledging existing parking within the park, and limiting required spots to a new minimum. The clustered uses, increased density, and mixture of public and retail options should create a more vibrant space. This could in time provide a center of focus for the residents of the Southwest area, while allowing them access to the park.

Appropriate uses

While the limiting of uses within the Town Center should be approached with caution, the tenants of this development should respect the nature of the space. Restaurants, retail, and other destination spaces would be perfect matches for the nature of the Town Center. The residents and stakeholders expressed interest in a possible Post Office location on the site. The process by which this might be accomplished may move beyond the scope of this project, but could easily be incorporated into further development.

Connections

The gateway park entrance and farmer's market to the south of the town center, will offer a visible connection between the development and the park. This connection is important. The park can offer customers to the Retailers, and conversely, the retailers can offer patrons to the Park. This relationship would blur the lines between these public and private spaces, creating an truly authentic Town Center.

Zoning Changes + Development review

In order to facilitate the types of development appropriate within the Discovery Park Site Plan any plans for development must enter a review process. Such processes are already in place in Downtown Columbus with the Downtown Commission. The Southwest area already has a commission in place and controlling said development would require a set a simple guidelines, and the establishment of a review process.



COMMUNITY

THE ROLE OF COMMUNITY WITHIN THE DISCOVERY PARK IS INTEGRAL TO ITS SUCCESS. BY INVOLVING THOSE GROUPS WITH A VESTED INTEREST IN THE PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE PARK, ITS SUCCESS HAS BEEN LINKED WITH THE COMMUNITY ITSELF. THEY'VE ALREADY INVOLVED THEMSELVES IN THE COMMUNITY GARDENS AND THE PARK MUST ENSURE THAT THESE TYPES OF PROGRAMS CAN BE MAINTAINED AND EXPANDED.



Community Gardens

Gardens on the site have already succeeded. Their incorporation in the Discovery park should come as no surprise. Gardeners in 2009 harvested more than 2000 pounds of crops from the site. This profound success deserves investment, and expansion. The gardeners have expressed their needs for several important improvements to the site. These are modest requests including restroom facilities, and a wash station. Those elements along with others will be included in the new Discovery Park Community Gardening Campus.

Additions to the Gardens

- **Restroom facilities**—located near the Farmer's Market pole barn to the north of the site
- **Tool Rental Shed**— Shed will open on farming days with first arrival and close at dusk.
- **Wash Station**—located close to the market, the wash station will provide gardeners facilities to wash their product for their consumption or for the market days.



Current Community Gardens at the Site

THE GARDEN COUNCIL

As the park matures the gardens will require a stronger structure to facilitate the management of the area. The organization may start by including the site in the American Community Gardening Association's database of community gardens. The next step will be to establish a group or council of directors. These individuals should have control over the garden's budget and will regulate tool rental and plot allocation. The Council would be integral in the establishment of Market days and the management of such events. Promotion would be key to the success of the market, and the council members should use portions of their budget to market the market.



A Garden Plot, Franklin Park's Community Gardens



A Wash Station for the Gardens

PARQUE GULLIVER

Parc Gulliver in Valencia, Spain was the brain child of Architect, Rafael Rivera, artist, Manolo Martin, and designer Sento. This creative collaboration helped to form one the more unique play environments in the world. The Giant "Gulliver" is criss-crossed with slides, ramps and caves, and can be scaled and explored. This surreal environment is precisely the imaginative design that distinguishes playscapes from the more common playground. Playscapes have an artistic presence or value that is capable of enhancing and promoting their surrounding area.



Parque Gulliver, Valencia, Spain

Playscape

The first declared function of this large site was for the direct benefit of children. For nearly half of a century this land served this important purpose. Any new design for this site should have a portion of its land devoted expressly to children and their healthy development.

Playscapes vs. Playgrounds

To distinguish this site as a playscape as opposed to a playground, assumes a higher level of thought in the area's conception. A playscape assumes children enjoy adventure and exploration. It understands the child's imagination and creates a unique environment to explore. The specific design of such a space is beyond the scope of this plan, however the design would need to incorporate the concepts of discovery. Many aspects of the park celebrate Columbus, and Ohio's history. It would be interesting to see a design that incorporated this local history and pride into unique and complex play environment.

Location

The location for the playscape as indicated on the map and would include roughly one acre in the western portion of the Park, near the Serpent Mound. Its inclusion on the passive portion of the park will be intended to increase traffic to back half.

Outdoor Galleries

An outdoor gallery moves the art experience from the museum to the public forum. In this case, the sculptures and out-of-doors artworks will be spread throughout the park. A special aspect of these galleries will be their placement along hiking trails within the park. Furthering this idea of discovery, sculptures will lead visitors through the park, guiding and shaping their experience along the way.



Ameriaflora Sculpture, Franklin Park Conservatory



Fig. 5 Parable, Buster Simpson



Fig. 6 The Dream Ship, Miles Pepper



Fig. 7 Zobala, Kevin Patella

OUTDOOR GALLERIES: COLUMBUS AND SEATTLE

CONSERVATION AND RECREATION

LOOKING DOWN ON SITE, THE PATCH OF GREEN SEEMS OUT OF PLACE IN THE SUBURBAN EXPANSE. IT'S RARE TO SEE SUCH A CLUSTERING OF TREES WITHIN THE CITY, THAT HASN'T ALREADY BE ESTABLISHED AS A PARK. IT IS THEREFORE CRUCIAL THAT A NEW DESIGN FOR THE SITE INCORPORATE THAT NATURAL STATE. THE DISCOVERY PARK WILL ESTABLISH SOME RECREATIONAL USE ON THE SITE, BUT FOCUS ON THE RE-GROWTH AND EXPANSION OF FORESTS, PRAIRIES AND NATURAL AREAS.



Bike Trails

The central circuit cutting through the park will stop just short of one mile. The Southwest Area plan proposed a multi-use trail along the Big Run Creek and running directly through the site. If this construction moves forward the parks trails could be easily connected to this new Big Run Trail and ultimately the Scioto trail to the farther East. This connection could be made even more critical if a trail was extended along Early Creek to the north, giving access to the hundreds of homes north of the park.

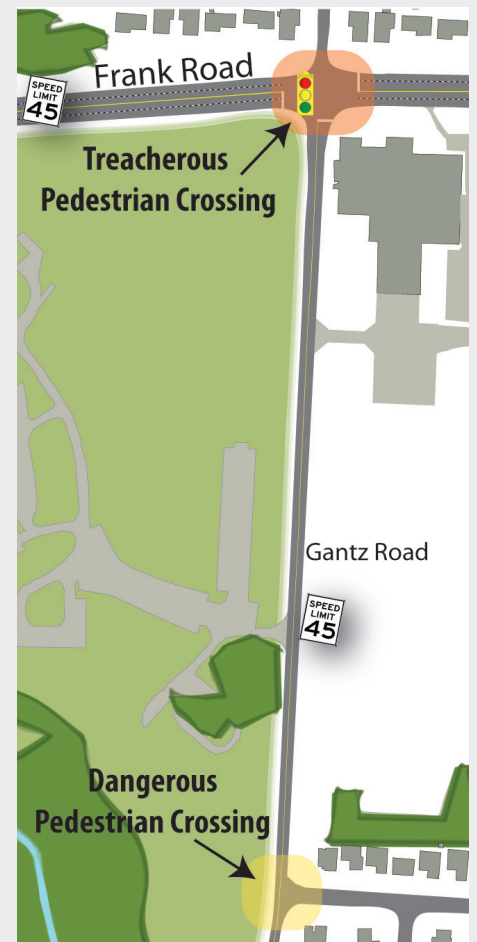
Hiking

Trails already exist cutting through the forests in the southern portions of the site. Within the discovery park these will be incorporated along with newly blazed trails. Each trail within the new network will have several nodes of intersection where hikers can actively choose their own path. These options will allow guests of the park to explore the site while at the same time experiencing the outdoor galleries along the way. Path amenities such as benches and trail lighting may be added as revenue from the town center accumulates.



Pedestrian Access

It is critical that the park, when operational, be accessible by foot. The site is currently surrounded on all sides by housing, but no crosswalks connect across Frank or Gantz Road. This disconnection would have to be addressed. Allowing pedestrians a quick and safe way across the busy thoroughfares is critical to the local success of the park.





Conservation

As stated earlier the site as it exists today, is beautiful. To destroy any aspect of this natural state would run contrary to the spirit of the Discovery Park. Rather, the new design will enhance the tree canopy, establish natural prairie ground, and create a water retention pond and wetland.

Forest Re-growth

The map diagrams areas of forest re-growth zones within the park. These occur mostly on the borderlands to the north and west of Early Creek, as well as fringe areas abutting Gantz and Frank Road. Forests are already well established in the southern portions of the Park.

Natural Prairie

Similar to projects in Prairie Oaks Metro Park and other central Ohio Parks, The Discovery park will designate a two acre portion of the site to Prairie brush growth. The goal within these zones is to provide in enhanced habitat for wildlife and a diverse natural setting for park goers to explore and enjoy.

Pond and wetland

The large depression left by the excavation for the Serpent mound will serve as a for a retention pond and wetland area. This pond can be actively used for fishing for those with proper licenses and will help to filter run-off from both the commercial and gardening areas.



A view of the Site looking from the East toward the West

THE SERPENT MOUND

The Ohio mound building cultures left an indelible mark on the natural environments they encountered. The Southwest area actually has two mounds within its defined borders. They're raised remnants of a long past culture, remembered almost solely by these impressive earthen works. The most astonishing and perplexing of these is the Great Serpent Mound of Southern Ohio. This 1300 foot slithering beast stands only three feet tall, but never fails to amaze visitors. From the viewing tower the monument is so perfect that one wonders how this ancient culture could have possibly created it.

The Serpent Mound within the Discovery Park will serve a dual purpose. It should enhance the visibility of the Park, and define its goal. As an icon and destination point for visitors to the park, it will be placed within the heart of the park's western expanse. This will draw visitors along the trails and deeper into the galleries. The mound should be the largest example of the park's general theme of discovery. Visitors should leave the park having found something, even if it's as blatantly obvious as this large monument. The mound will be built with the excavated dirt taken from the pond and wetland area. Any additional dirt required will either curtail the length of the mound, or be imported.

Fig. 8



The Great Serpent Mound, Thegreatserpentmound.com

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PART III: IMPLEMENTATION



IMPLEMENTATION

THE COORDINATED IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DISCOVERY PARK PLAN WILL REQUIRE THE COLLABORATION OF THE COMMUNITY, COUNTY AND TOWNSHIP. THE PARK, IF COMPLETED, HAS THE POTENTIAL TO PROVIDE ALL OF THE DESIRED OUTCOMES OF THE COMMUNITY AND THE TAX REVENUE REQUIRED BY THE COUNTY. THE SPACE WOULD BE UTILIZED BY ALL INTERESTED PARTIES IN THE WAY THEY HAD ENVISIONED. A BASIC PRO FORMA OF EXPENDITURES HAS BEEN PROVIDED BELOW. THE ESTIMATES FOR THE VARIOUS PROJECTS ARE INCLUDED ALONG WITH SIMPLE NUMBERS RELATED TO MAINTENANCE AND ADMINISTRATION. THE PROJECT COULD FUNDED IN SEVERAL WAYS. THIS BREAKDOWN IS ILLUSTRATED IN THE SECOND SECTION. THE FINAL ASPECT OF THE IMPLEMENTATION CHAPTER DESCRIBES POSSIBILITY OF METRO PARK INCORPORATION, AND HOW IT COULD BENEFIT THE PARK.

Brief Pro Forma

PROJECT	EXPENSE
Structures	
Pole Barn for the Farmer's Market	\$50,000
Garden Multi-Purpose Buildings (Wash Station, Tool Shed)	\$50,000
Private Development within the Towncenter	Developer Expense
Pathways	
Bikeway	\$21,000
Hiking Trails	\$8,000
Playscape	
Consulted Design	\$10,000
Construction	\$100,000
Serpent Mound	No Credible Estimates
Capital Improvements	
Drive Improvement	\$10,000
Signage	\$5,000
Staff/Maintenance	
See Metro Park Incorporation	see grants section
total \$264,000	

Grants and Available Money

- The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services awards grants toward healthy community development. These have included Garden Market construction and support.
- MOPRC's TE funds offer grant money to Bikeway and trail development throughout Franklin and Surrounding counties.
- The Ohio Cultural Facilities Commission could help in organizing public art galleries.
- The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services also offers grants for the promotion of healthy children. This has gone toward funding playgrounds in the past and could easily be applied to this project.

Metro Park Involvement

The Columbus Metro Park system includes 16 parks spread throughout the Central Ohio Area. Only two, however, are within Columbus' I-270 Outerbelt. Metro Park incorporation of the Southwest Discovery Park would benefit all those involved. The Metro Park's would absorb a wonderfully preserved, 70 acre site, and the county and Township would pass management of the site's Park areas to this very capable organization. The symbiotic relationship with the development in the Northeast corner could still be maintained, with the active cooperation of the County, Township, developers, and Metro Park Organization. The 2010 Budget for the Franklin County Metro Parks allocated \$11 million for the acquisition of the new land. This surplus shows the organization could very capably absorb the site and after partnering with the County and Township, execute the Discovery Plan.



Sources

- The Southwest Area Plan
- The Franklin County Metro Parks (website), and 2010 Budget
- The Great Serpent Mound of Southern Ohio (website)
- The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
- MORPC
- The Franklin Park Conservatory
- The US Census

Figures

- **Fig 1**-The southwest area plan. (n.d.). Retrieved from <http://www.columbuswac.org/>
- **Fig 2**-Town Square, (town square of Koronowo) Wikimedia Commons. 21 April 2006
- **Fig 3**-Farmer's Market, Myinnwood.net
- **Fig 4**-Parque gulliver. (n.d.). Retrieved from <http://playgrounddesigns.blogspot.com/2009/10/parque-gulliver-valencia-spain-1990.html>
- **Fig 5-7**- Seattle outdoor art. (n.d.). Retrieved from <http://www.seattleoutdoorart.com/>
- **Fig 8**- The great serpent mound of southern ohio. (n.d.). Retrieved from <http://greatserpentmound.com/>

HELPFUL WEBSITES

PLAYSCAPES-Playgrounddesign.blogspot.com

CONSERVATION-www.metroparks.net

OUTDOOR ART-www.seattleoutdoorart.com

SOUTHWEST AREA PLAN-columbuswac.org

COMMUNITY GARDENS-communitygarden.org

