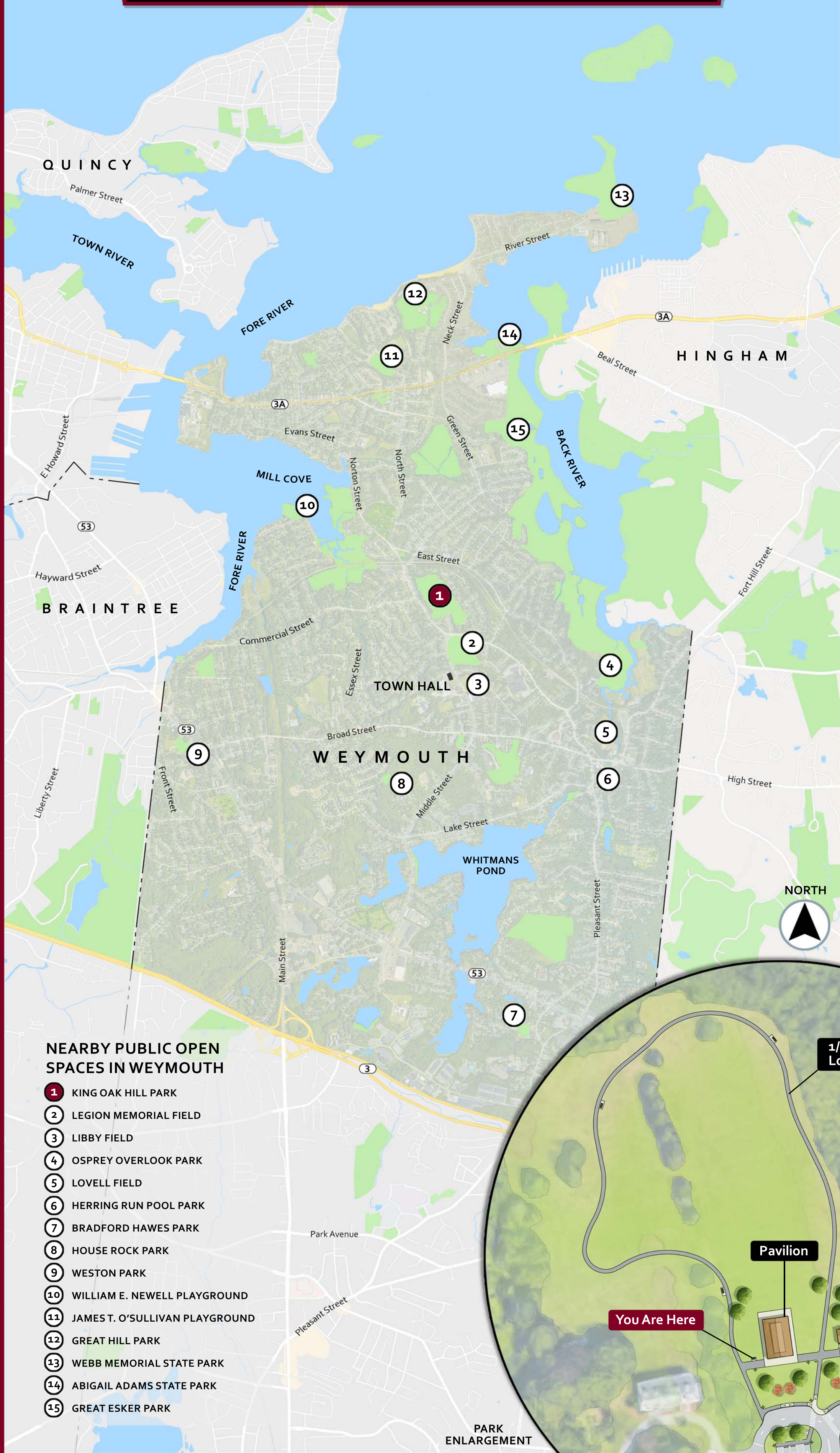


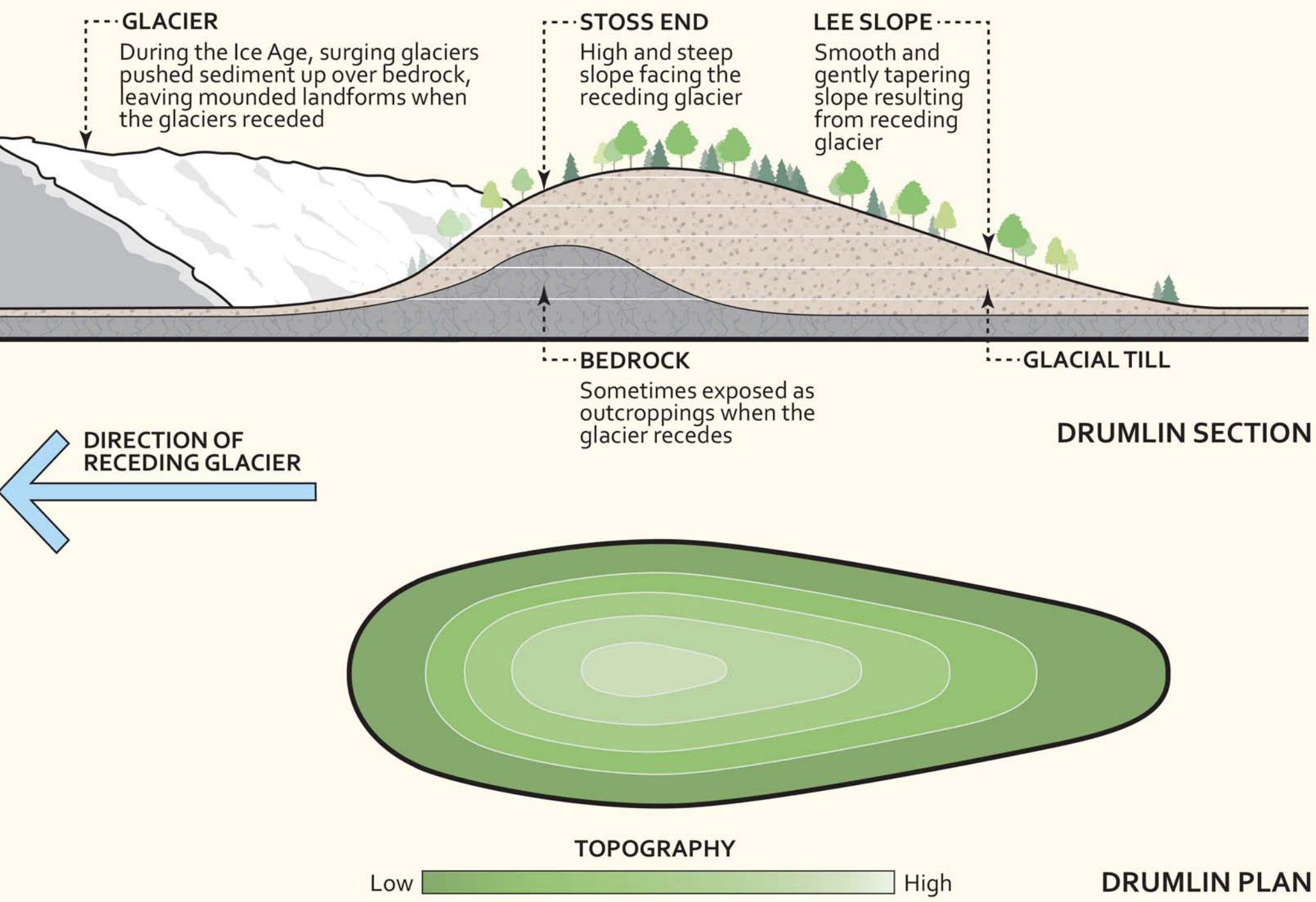
King Oak Hill Park

WEYMOUTH, MASSACHUSETTS



Stewardship of the Park

Acquired by the Town of Weymouth in 2011, King Oak Hill Park preserves 24 acres of pristine open space for passive recreation and public enjoyment. This large, continuous swath of land, equal in area to 18 football fields, was purchased by the Town with \$1.9 million in local Community Preservation funds. These funds provide a steady source of revenue for the Town to preserve and improve Weymouth's character and quality of life, including its open spaces and recreation lands. King Oak Hill Park's unique geology, flora and fauna, and high elevation offer a secluded retreat from the bustling town below. Its wooded edges encircle five acres of sweeping grounds atop the summit of King Oak Hill, providing views of the Boston skyline. Improvements to the grounds were completed in 2018 to increase the park's accessibility and provide formal amenities for recreation and social gatherings. The looped walking path is a 1/4 mile around. Funding for these improvements was provided by the Town in partnership with the Massachusetts PARC Program. Thanks to foresight, planning, and partnerships, future generations will always have access to this special place.



Geology of King Oak Hill

More than 16,000 years ago, at the end of the last Ice Age, meltwater from a receding glacier created many of the landforms that we see today in Weymouth. The melting ice sheet resulted in erosion and the exposure of various rock formations, as well as massive deposits of glacial till or sediment. Landforms in Weymouth resulting from this process include the esker in Great Esker Park, the outcroppings (bedrock) at House Rock Park, and the drumlin known as King Oak Hill. Derived from the Gaelic word *droimnín* meaning "little ridge," a drumlin is an oval or elongated hill or mound formed by glacial movement. As a glacier recedes, glacial till is left behind, resulting in the drumlin, which takes the shape a half-buried egg or inverted spoon. Drumlins often occur in groups numbering tens or even thousands, and are referred to as swarms. Drumlins similar to King Oak Hill can be found at World's End in Hingham, MA and the Boston Harbor Islands.



Photo Credit: Valerie A. Russo. Photo taken from cupola of the Emery House (2015).

A Brief Site History

During the Contact Period (A.D. 1500-1620), when Europeans began actively exploring and settling along the New England coast, King Oak Hill was strategically positioned at the junction of an important Native American trail network. Trails during this period were actually well-worn paths, radiating across southeastern Massachusetts and connecting the Native Massachusetts and Wampanoag territories. Several of these trails ran adjacent to King Oak Hill, including an important coastal trail that aligned roughly with the current configuration of Commercial Street and had branches leading to Wessagusset Beach. High points such as King Oak Hill were likely used as hunting or game lookouts during this period.

Following the Town's settlement, King Oak Hill served as an important topographical landmark and was used consistently for agricultural purposes throughout the 17th and 18th centuries. Gilbert Nash (1885) notes that King Oak Hill was divided into "garden spots" by early English settlers.¹ Commercial Street at the base of the hill was a principal thoroughfare between Boston and Plymouth, and the magnificent views to the hill encouraged residential development along its base. The summit remained undeveloped until the early 20th century, but it was occasionally used for grand public events, such as the 250th anniversary of the Town's establishment, presided over by Charles Francis Adams, Jr., historian and grandson of President John Quincy Adams.

In modern times, King Oak Hill is probably best known as the site of the Emery Homestead – a former single-family farmed estate featuring a Georgian Revival home modeled after George Washington's Mount Vernon. Built in 1903 by William H. Binnian, the property was transferred in 1916 to Allan C. Emery, a prominent wool merchant. The Emery family owned the estate for nearly a century before its purchase by the Town in 2011. For much of this time, the property operated as a working farm and was enlarged by the Emery family to its existing 24 acres. In 1925, Boston architect Alfred L. Darrow commented that the site commanded an "almost unparalleled view of the region around... On clear days it is possible to stand by the front steps or to look out of the lower windows and see some 40 miles along the coast."² Though the view of the Boston skyline has changed, King Oak Hill continues to retain its commanding status.

1. Nash, Gilbert, 1885, *Historical Sketch of the Town of Weymouth, Massachusetts, From 1622 to 1884*. Weymouth Historical Society, Weymouth, MA.

2. (1925, February 20). Copy of Washington Mansion Crowns High Hill in Weymouth. *The Christian Science Monitor*, pg. 3.

3. Park design and panel graphics by Shadley Associates, P.C.