



bjr Landscape architecture • Urban design

SUMMIT PARK

Expanding urban recreation opportunities need not be tied to the availability of land for additional parks and open space. Often, great potential can be realized through assessment of existing facilities and user needs. Park revitalization, facility development, and improved programming and maintenance can result in an expanded recreation system directly accessible to and fulfilling the needs of neighborhood residents.

Summit Park, a recent addition to Ann Arbor's recreation facilities, reflects the City's commitment to provide neighborhood recreation responsive to the needs and desires of area residents and has added an exciting dimension to the community's recreational resources. An existing neighborhood playground, under-utilized and poorly equipped, was transformed into a neighborhood facility providing for active and passive recreational pursuits of a broad range of interests. The two-acre park includes a new picnic and performance structure, a recycled facility housing restrooms and an ice skating warming room, a central spray pool, a running and roller skating track, basketball and hard court play areas, and a creative sculpture tot lot.

Working together, the Ann Arbor City Council, Department of Parks and Recreation, Michigan Department of Natural Resources, Model Cities Policy Board, North Central Property Owners' Association (representing the residents of the neighborhood), and BJR, Inc., the park designers, established the major goals and objectives to which the program would respond.

- to provide attractive recreational facilities for a variety of age and social groups
- to provide a safe, inviting, well-lighted play environment with proper separation between major activities
- to design as much flexibility as possible into the facilities so that the widest possible range of uses could be achieved
- to provide for winter sports to make the park useable year-round
- to provide for both active and passive recreational experiences

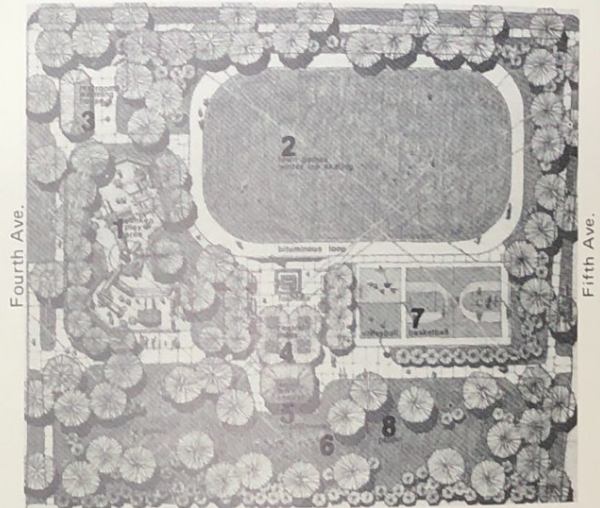
Throughout the design development of the park, BJR continued to meet with the Parks and Recreation Department and the North Central Property Owners' Association to jointly refine the content of the park design.



Summit Street, which divided the site, was vacated and the right-of-way was designed as a major pedestrian pathway across the site, bisecting the park into active and passive zones. This pathway forms the major entries at each end of the park. The more passive activities are located along the southern border where terrain and landscaping provide suitable buffering from residential neighbors. The active uses, which require more land area, are located in the northern portion of the site. A central plaza acts as a transition space between active and passive zones, and functions as the hub of the summer recreation program.

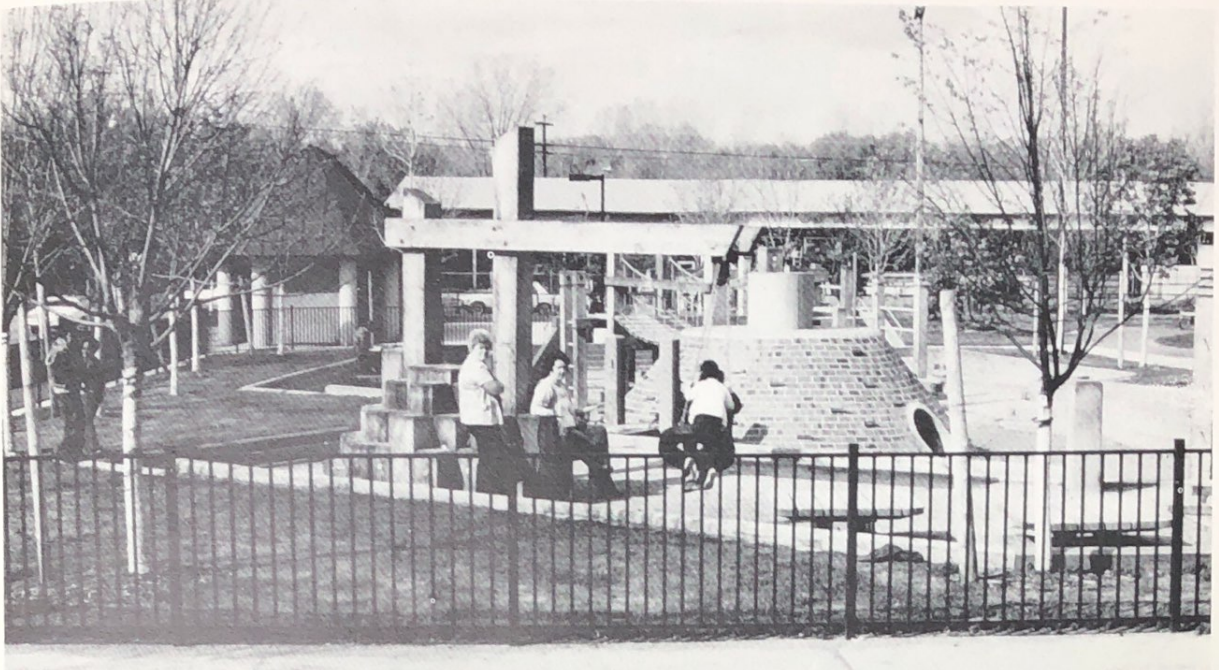


Depot St.



The design blends a great many passive and active uses on a relatively small site. The site was zoned into sub-areas of activity, each designed for a different age group or level of activity. The activity zones are adequately separated, but linked to a central plaza by the walkway system.





A **sculptured tot lot (1)** provides a safe, challenging environment for youngsters, fenced along the edge bordering Fourth Avenue. Its lower elevation defines the limits of the tot lot, reduces the profile of the timber play equipment, and provides a secure space in which tots can play. A play environment designed with variety and increasing levels of challenge allows youngsters to play in the security of accomplishments or to explore play potentials of greater difficulty. All of the timber play pieces are arranged in a linear sequence and linked so that each play event overlaps with the next. The unique beehive-shaped brick mound is the focus of the play area and is connected to the other play elements with bridges, tunnels, slides, and escape hatches.

The **bituminous track (2)** circles a large open lawn area with flexible uses. The track along the outside edge is used for jogging, roller skating, bicycle riding, and skateboarding. The outer edges of the track are mounded and heavily planted to reinforce its definition and to provide adequate separation from external street elements. Inside the track, a large lawn area was planned for many outdoor activities like football, soccer, kite flying, frisbee, and baseball. In winter the lawn area is flooded and maintained for ice skating. The **renovated park shelter (3)** adjacent to the lawn and track area serves as a warming hut in winter and has restroom facilities for year-round use.

A **central plaza (4)** links all major activity zones and serves as a passive resting place. The plaza features a metal sculpture spray fountain surrounded by wooden benches and large shade trees. The fountain doubles as a tot's splash area during the summer. A **new park performance shelter (5)** forms one edge of the plaza, providing covered

space for games, performances, and display. The shelter is wired for sound and lighting equipment for summer performances. The pyramidal metal roof reflects the architectural influence of the neighborhood and is consistent with the renovated style of the park shelter. Together, the central plaza and performance shelter successfully link the active zones to the passive zones in the southern portion of the site. A **sculptured earth amphitheater (6)** wraps around the southern edge of the performance shelter and blends with a lawn area reserved for picnics and other passive uses.

Basketball and court games (7) are located along the eastern edge of the central plaza. The court's bituminous surface is brightly painted to define each activity and to add visual interest. The courts are depressed along street edges to accommodate a grade change and to reinforce edge definition and buffer the area from traffic. The bituminous track and central plaza area, adjacent to the hard court games area, provide separation of this active area from other areas and activities for other age groups and encourage older youngsters to play in the eastern portion of the park.

Extensive landscaping throughout the park is the major unifying element in the overall scheme. Several varieties of small flowering trees provide visual interest and spatial definition under the canopy of the larger shade trees. The layout of the landscaping is informal, reinforcing each site element along the paths toward the central plaza. Planting in the plaza is formal, reflecting the formal relationship of the plaza and performance shelter. Along the southern border, an **evergreen screen (8)** defines and buffers the park from its residential edge and street trees were planted along each street edge to reflect the residential street plantings in the neighborhood.



Photo Courtesy of *The Ann Arbor News*,
Larry E. Wright.

The initial site of the park, the northwestern parcel, had been the old City Public Works Yard before it was converted to a playground. The parcel east of it had been a slaughter house and sausage production plant. The southern parcel of the site was previously a junk and salvage yard. In 1968 the sausage plant was acquired by the City through a HUD Open Space Grant and set aside as an addition to the playground. In 1975 the southern parcel was acquired through another HUD Open Space Grant and planning began in earnest for Summit Park. By demonstrating the need for open space and recreational facilities in the neighborhood, the City received a grant through the Michigan Department of Natural Resources Recreation Bond Program for site development.



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