

# FRANKLIN PARK

## VISION AND TRANSFORMATION PLAN

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT NEWSLETTER



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## Tell us what you think?

Dear Friends,

The National Park Service (NPS), in collaboration with the District of Columbia and the DowntownDC Business Improvement District, is pleased to announce that the Franklin Park Vision and Transformation Plan and Environmental Assessment (EA) is available for public review. Earlier in the process, we asked for your input on how Franklin Park could better serve its diverse users, now we are seeking your thoughts and feedback on three alternatives for revitalizing Franklin Park

Using feedback we received from the public, as well as a technical panel of park designers and planners convened to inform the planning process, we developed a range of concept alternatives to revitalize Franklin Park and meet the plan's goals. We reviewed these concept alternatives with the public to receive feedback and direction for further refining the alternatives. Our team members then analyzed the impacts of those alternatives on visitor use and experience, historic structures and districts, cultural resources and landscapes, soils, vegetation, public safety and accessibility, and park management and operations. We then identified a preferred alternative design that would best meet the plan goals and objectives.

All of this information is now presented for your review in the Environmental Assessment, which has been prepared in accordance with the 1969 National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA); Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended; and other laws, policies and regulations. Because your feedback is essential to the development of the Final Plan/EA, we are asking for your thoughtful review and comments during the 30-day comment period. You can submit your comments in two principle ways: online at [www.parkplanning.nps.gov/FranklinPark](http://www.parkplanning.nps.gov/FranklinPark) or by mail. Please see the "How to Comment" section at the end of the newsletter for details.

As vital contributors to the planning process, we hope you take the opportunity to provide feedback. Thank you.

Robert Vogel  
Superintendent

## PROJECT BACKGROUND



Franklin Park Area Map

Franklin Park is located between K and I Streets, NW and 13th and 14th Streets, NW in downtown Washington, DC and is owned by NPS. The park sits within the neighborhood of Center City DC, the heart of DC's office market and a growing residential area. Currently the park does not meet the diverse needs of neighborhood residents, workers or visitors; however, there is the potential to transform Franklin Park into one of our nation's premier urban parks. To realize this dramatic transformation, NPS and its partners are investigating options for increasing recreational opportunities, adding essential services such as food service and restrooms, increasing events and programs, restoring historic resources, incorporating sustainable and ecologically sensitive materials and practices, enhancing surrounding streetscape and transportation connections, and using a public/private partnership to oversee the long-term funding, maintenance and management of the park.

## PURPOSE OF AND NEED FOR THE PROJECT

The purpose of the project is to revitalize Franklin Park in a manner that respects and enhances the historic and urban qualities of the park while transforming it into an active, flexible, and sustainable park that is connected to its community.

As a large park situated within the increasingly populated center city, lacking access to open space, Franklin Park provides a unique opportunity to serve the community and enhance urban living. Currently, park features are deteriorated and essential services, such as adequate seating and programming, are lacking. In addition, opportunities exist for better connections to both the historic and current urban context. The project is needed to address these deficiencies and revitalize the park so that it attracts and serves all visitors.

## ALTERNATIVES DEVELOPMENT

### Public Scoping

The alternatives development process began with analysis and observation of the current conditions of Franklin Park and its urban context. The project team examined local demographic trends, documented existing site conditions and park user behavior, and surveyed park users and neighbors. This site research was supplemented with a study of signature urban parks to develop recommendations of successful physical characteristics and programming.

The initial findings and analysis were shared at a project public scoping meeting in November 2013, and the project team facilitated an interactive exercise to document publicly desired uses and programs for the park. Based on the feedback from public scoping meeting, public comments submitted to the NPS via the project website and by US Mail, and initial findings and analysis, the project team developed a recommended park programming and use report to inform the creation of the concept design alternatives.



### Development/Refinement of Concept Alternatives

In February 2014, the project team released the concept design alternatives for public feedback and shared them at a public concept alternatives meeting. The project team then refined the concept alternatives based on public feedback and input from stakeholder and technical advisory committees.

In May 2014, the NPS conducted a Choosing by Advantages workshop to identify a preferred alternative by determining which alternative offered the most advantages for the best value. The discussions and analysis at the workshop led to further refinement of the alternatives that had been previously presented to the public in February 2014. Several alternatives were dismissed because they were determined to have excessive impacts or did not meet project goals as successfully as similar options included in the analysis. Alternatives and alternative elements that were dismissed are discussed in the “Alternatives Considered but Dismissed from Further Detailed Analysis” section of the Plan/EA.



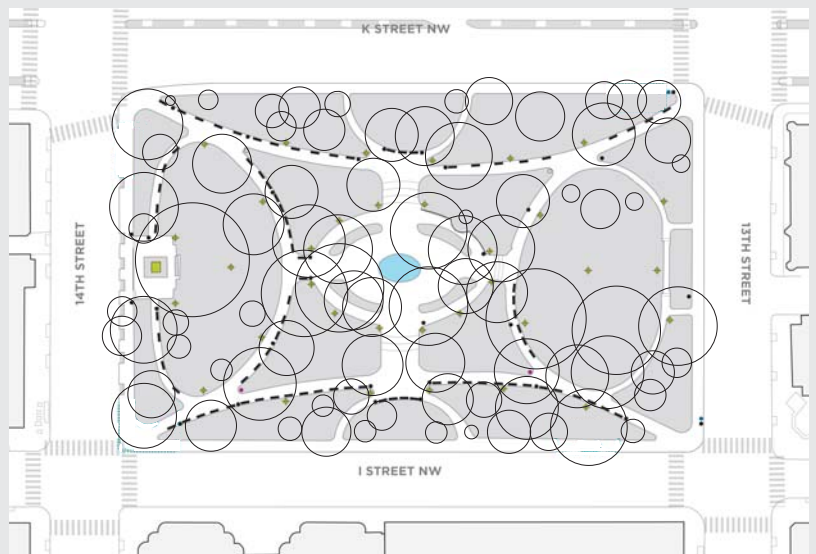
November 2013 Public Scoping Meeting

### Alternatives Carried Forward for Analysis

- Alternative 1 - “No Action”
- Alternative 2 - “The Center” (Options A and B)
- Alternative 3 - “The Edge” (NPS Preferred Alternative)

## ALTERNATIVE 1 - “NO ACTION”

The “No Action” Alternative represents a continuation of the existing conditions, operations, maintenance, programming, and visitor use of the Franklin Park area. The existing circulation patterns, including social trails, would continue, subjecting the park to substantial wear. The degraded pathways would not be replaced or repaired. The current fountain and associated plumbing system would remain in place with extensive deficiencies and would become inoperable with time. Ongoing maintenance of Franklin Park would continue, including trash pickup, tree and shrub care including pruning and mulching, snow and ice removal as needed, and turf care maintenance. The existing tree profile would continue to be maintained; however, hazardous trees would be removed as they arise.



Existing Conditions Site Plan

## ALTERNATIVE 2 - “THE CENTER” (OPTION A and B)

Alternative 2 would rehabilitate and enhance the park while retaining its existing historic layout and circulation. The focus of this alternative is a restored central water fountain within the existing central plaza framed by the existing ring of trees along with new seasonal plantings around the perimeter of the plaza.

In order to serve the growing demographic of families with young children in this center city neighborhood, a 9,000 square-foot children’s play area would be located within the northern half of the east lawn. Additional improvements to the park include ample seating for park users and bus commuters; amenities, such as electric charging stations and street trees along 13th Street; and bike racks along K Street.

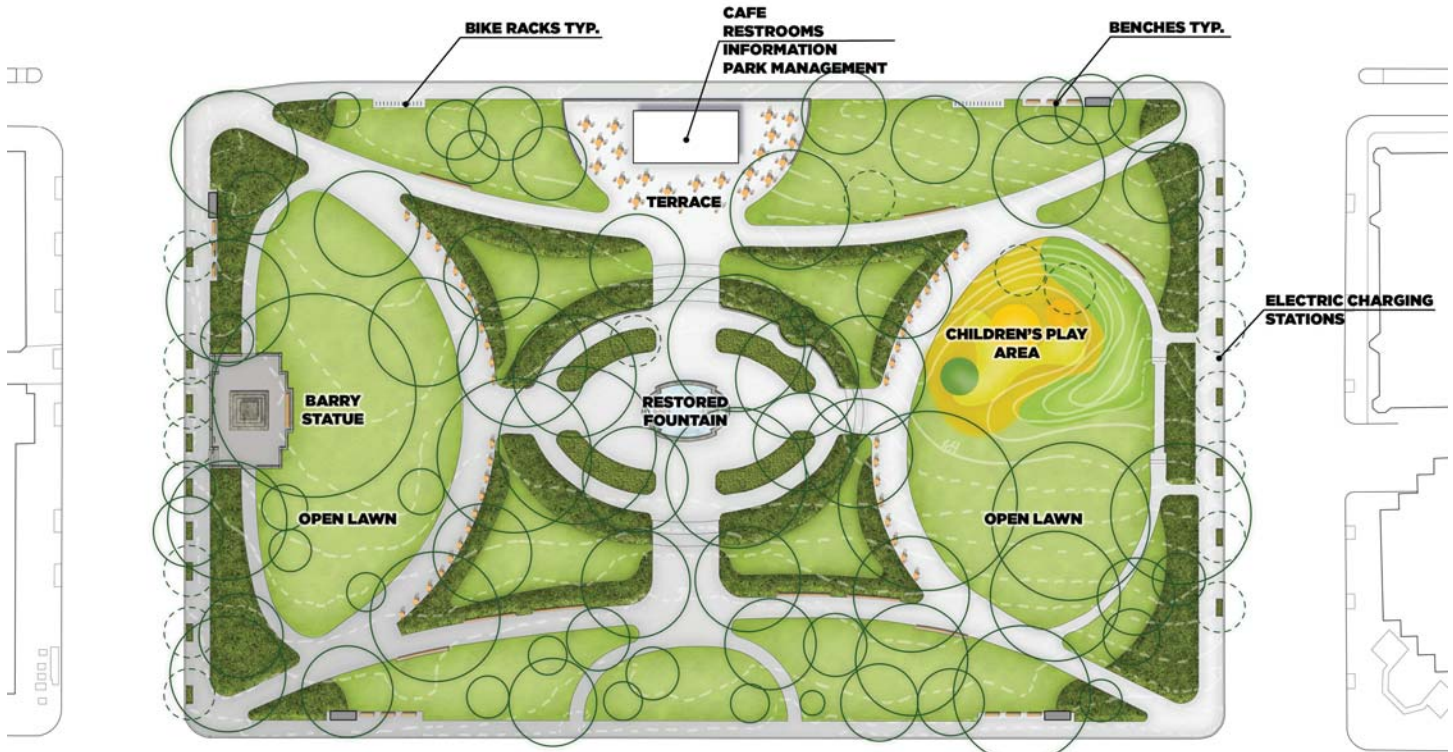
Circulation would be enhanced by widening sidewalks on 13th Street and I Street. In order to accommodate small-scale events, the arc paths to the east and west of the park’s center would be widened to 20 feet. This increase in pavement would allow for events, such as craft or farmer’s markets. The pavement would also serve as a durable surface to locate a stage for a musical or theatrical performance in the west lawn.

The design of the park would be further enhanced with two options for hardscape terraces: Option A includes a moderately sized terrace to the north of the central plaza that also features a 1,800 square-foot café building to house essential services such as maintenance space, information booth, and restrooms; Option B includes a small terrace to the central eastern edge of the park with no structure.

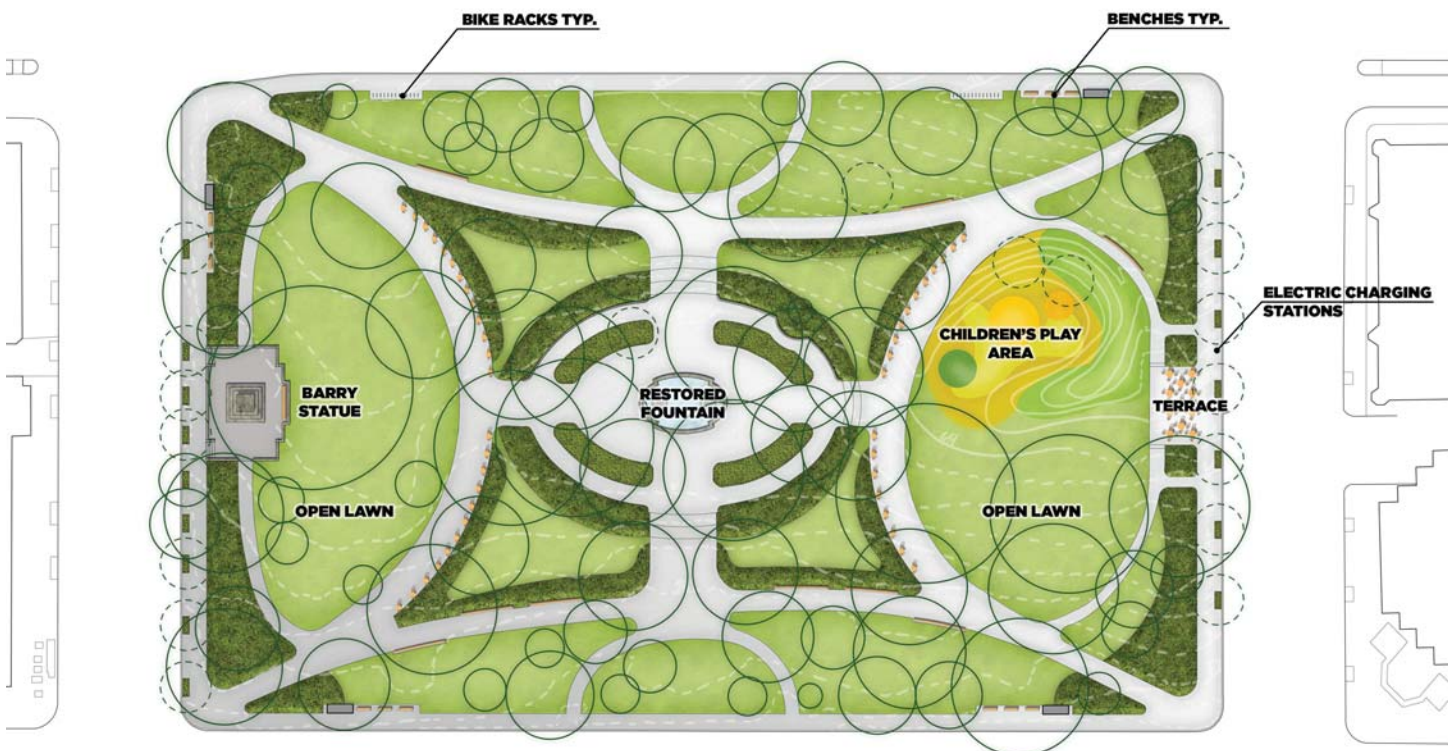
This concept alternative would preserve approximately 90% of the existing trees in Franklin Park.



**“THE CENTER”:** Rendered Image of the Central Fountain Plaza



“THE CENTER”: Option A Site Plan



“THE CENTER”: Option B Site Plan

## **ALTERNATIVE 3 - “THE EDGE” (NPS Preferred Alternative)**

Alternative 3 would rehabilitate and enliven the park with enhanced program elements and circulation improvements while retaining much of the historic layout. The southern pathway that currently extends from the southwest corner of the site to the south east corner of the site would be shifted north towards the center of the park to increase accessibility to the central plaza and facilitate diagonal southwest to northeast circulation.

At the park’s center would be a newly designed interactive fountain, in keeping with the shape and form of the existing fountain, to allow park users to comfortably sit along its edge and engage the water. The existing ring of trees around the central plaza would be removed in order to improve fountain maintenance and allow more sunlight, and the dimensions of the plaza would be reduced slightly to create a more intimate space. Seasonal plantings and new trees would be added around the outer perimeter of the central plaza, and seating options would be added to the inner edge of the central plaza.

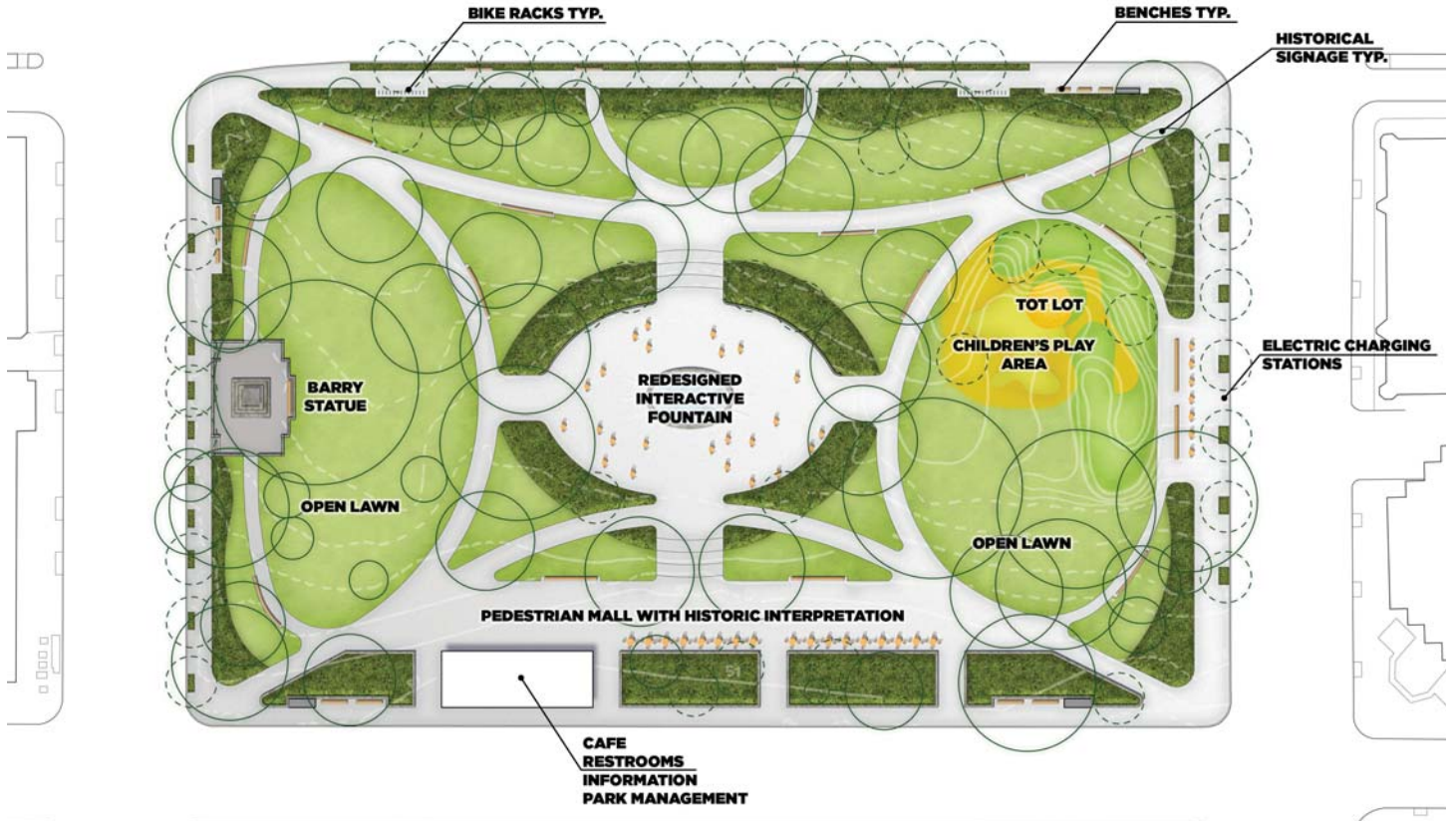
A 35-foot-wide pedestrian plaza would be constructed along the southern edge of the site to accommodate larger and more diverse events and programming. A 2,100 square-foot café building would be positioned on the plaza near the southwestern entrance to the park. In addition to a café, the building would also house basic amenities such as maintenance space, an information booth, and restrooms. Planters would border the south side of the pedestrian mall and seasonal plantings would be added around all edges of the park to provide a sense of threshold between the park and the street edge.

An expanded 12,000 square-foot children’s play area and tot lot would be constructed on the northern half of the east lawn. Additional improvements to the park include ample seating for park users and bus commuters, engravings or signage delineating the history of the park; and amenities, such as electric charging stations and street trees along 13th Street, and bike racks and street trees along K Street.

With these modifications to the park, this concept alternative would preserve approximately 77% of the existing tree canopy in Franklin Park.



**“THE EDGE”:** Rendered Image of the Central Fountain Plaza



**“THE EDGE”:** Site Plan

## HOW TO COMMENT

The NPS is seeking your comments on the Plan/EA. Please submit comments through the project website at: <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/franklinpark>, or you may send comments to:

Attn: Franklin Park Vision and Transformation Plan  
Superintendent  
National Mall and Memorial Parks  
900 Ohio Drive, SW  
Washington, DC 20024

### The public review and comment period will close on Friday, January 9, 2015

*Please include your full name and e-mail/address with your comments so we may add you to our mailing list for future notices about this process. Please be advised that address, phone number, e-mail address, or other personal identifying information in your comment may be made publicly available at any time. While you can ask us in your comment to withhold your personal identifying information from public review, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so.*

## ADDITIONAL PROJECT INFORMATION

Additional project information, including the full Franklin Park Vision and Transformation Plan Environmental Assessment document and other project files from throughout the planning process, are available for public viewing and download on the Franklin Park project website at: <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/franklinpark>

## ESTIMATED SCHEDULE FOR COMPLETION OF THE PLAN/EA

- |                          |   |
|--------------------------|---|
| • December 2 - January 9 | Public review of EA (30 days)             |
| • TBD                    | Section 106 Consulting Parties Meeting #3 |
| • Winter 2015            | NPS begins schematic design               |
| • March 2015             | Announcement of decision                  |
| • Spring 2015            | NPS begins construction design            |
| • 2016                   | Begin park renovation                     |



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National Mall and Memorial Parks  
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