

# making space:

## CITY OF TEMPE EQUITY STUDY FOR PARKS AND RECREATION

### **Parks and Recreation Capital Improvement Process Analysis + Recommendations**



Prepared by: **DESIGNWORKSHOP**

# EXISTING CITY CIP INVESTMENT PROCESS

## Introduction

The purpose of this memo is to summarize the City's parks improvement investment process, provide a map depicting investments made on parks and recreational facilities between 2015 and 2023, and suggest recommendations for a future CIP investment approach in consideration of equity, inclusion, and diversity considerations. It is important to note that that the outward facing CIP park plan and the recreational value approach is specific to neighborhood and community parks, and excludes the preserves and regional parks.

## Existing Park Funding Prioritization Method

The City of Tempe's Parks and Recreation Division categorizes park improvements into the following four categories:

|                                                                                                                                                                                    |                         |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Level 1 (L1): Public Health and Safety</li><li>Level 2 (L2): Existing Assets = taking care of amenities currently present in parks</li></ul> | BASE LEVEL OF AMENITIES |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Level 3 (L3): Customer Enhancements</li><li>Level 4 (L4): System Expansion and New Amenities</li></ul>                                       | ENHANCED AMENITIES      |

From 2015 to 2019, Tempe retooled the parks Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) process to better manage assets across the park system. This update included directing decision-making processes on park projects not associated with health and safety or maintenance of existing amenities (L1). The City continues to address **Level 1** investments by focusing on the replacement of broken, hazardous, degraded, or beyond useful life assets. It means means that anything dangerous is addressed immediately.

The **Level 2** Recreation Value Capital Improvement Plan introduces an assessment of park quality by examining the number of existing amenities (ramadas, trees, playgrounds, and site furnishings) in each park in proportion to the park size. The goal of this method to update park amenities across the system with a robust outreach and design process to replace aging infrastructure and also incorporate recreational value improvements identified. See page 4 for details on this methodology.

**L1** and **L2** first acknowledge that all neighborhoods deserve a park that have a minimum level ("base level") of park amenities. Once L1 and L2 priorities are completed, **L3** and **L4** enhancements can be addressed. Enhanced amenities are defined as amenities within parks that provide specific opportunities for playing, interacting and drawing people of all ages to visit

the park; they can include off-leash areas, fitness trails, sport courts, splash pads, disc golf, and skate parks, etc. The City's methodology notes that enhanced amenity types should reflect neighborhood interest and the total number would also be based on overall park size and general fiscal equity.

## CIP Prioritization Process

The City updated CIP planning with a spreadsheet listing each park and a count of their base amenities (i.e. trees, ramadas, playgrounds and site furnishings). A point system and goals of base amenities per acre (see Figure 1 and details on the next page) calculate a total score for identifying lowest ranking "Recreational Value" properties. Alternatively, base amenities may be addressed through other large park construction projects so that renovations on a site are completed concurrently. As of the middle of 2023, replacement or replacement, enhancements (such as ADA access and LED lighting improvements), and recreational value enhancements have has been completed or budgeted for implementation in the near future as a result of this methodology.

The process for Enhanced Amenities (L3 and L4) is the same as the process for Base Amenities, with the addition of a more robust public input process to determine the enhanced amenities desired for each park.

| Process for Base Amenities (L1 & L2) | Process for Enhanced Amenities (L3 & L4)       |
|--------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|
| 1. Inventory base amenities          | 1. Inventory base amenities                    |
| 2. Score park inventories            | 2. Score park inventories                      |
| 3. Rank and prioritize parks         | 3. Rank and prioritize parks                   |
| 4. Address deficiencies              | 4. Address deficiencies                        |
| 5. Public input process              | 5. Public input process                        |
|                                      | 6. Determine # and types of enhanced amenities |



Escalante Park

Park Recreational Value + Base Amenity Goals per Park

The charts below clarifies the types of amenities involved in a base level improvement as well as the amenity goal for each park to reach a minimum Park Recreational Value. The number of amenities are calculated based on park acreage.

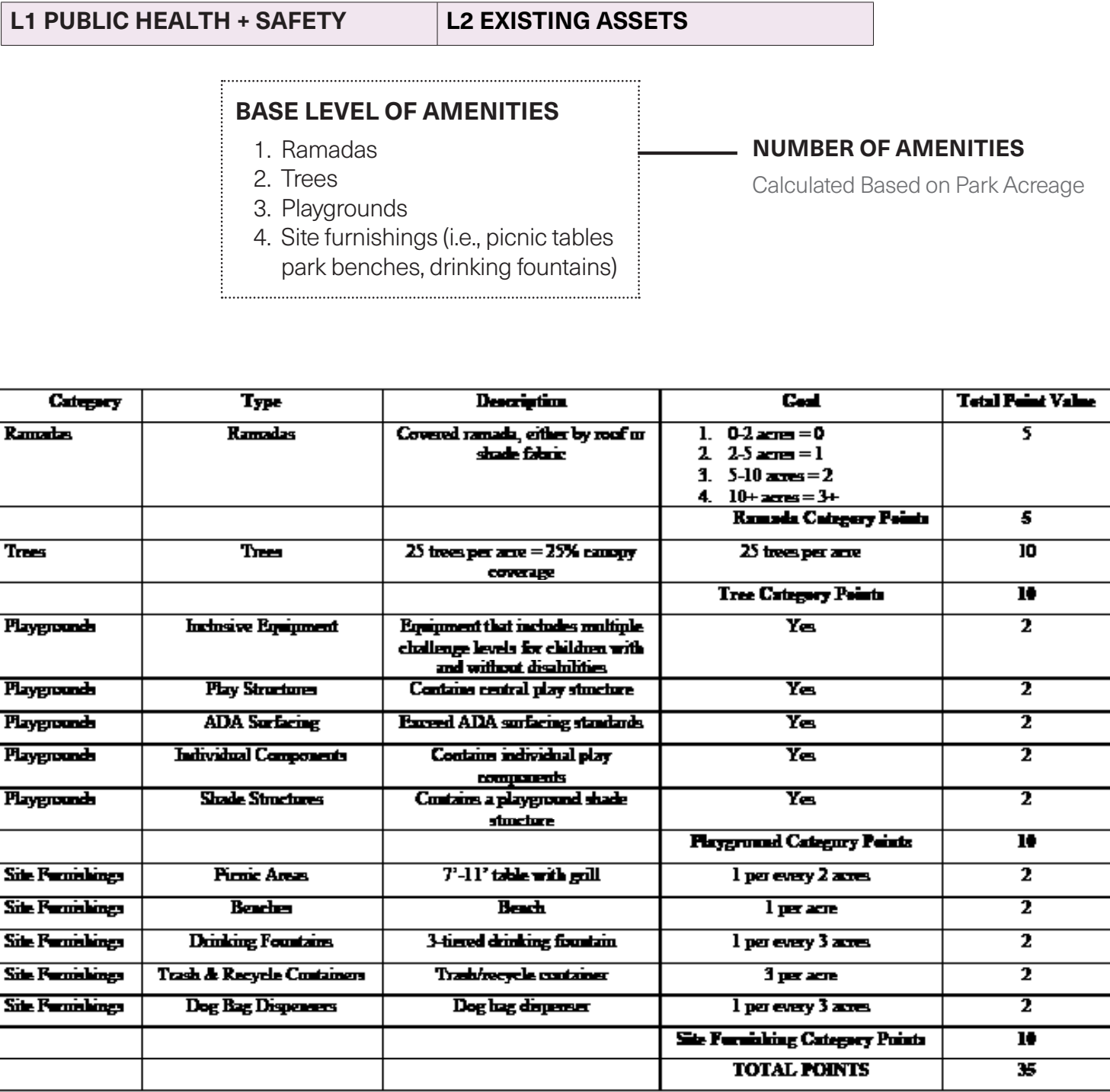


Figure 1: Neighborhood and Community Park Recreational Value Base Amenities

CAPITAL INVESTMENT TRENDS

Capital Investment Trends in Parks

According to the City's capital investment data (2015 - 2023), displayed on a map in Figure 2 along with the equity zones, **Papago Park North/ South, Evelyn Hallman, Joyce, Mary & Moses Green, and Moeur Park** have seen fewer improvement dollars than other parks. The table below compares equity zones with RV points, CIP investments (2015-2023) and the parks' conditional rating. Trends show that in the highest priority equity zones, only **Escalante Multi-Gen Center** has seen moderate investment amounts as compared to parks like **Parque de Soza (Hudson)**, and **Alegre Park**, which seemingly have fewer improvement dollars during this period than those outside equity zones (ie: Estrada Park, the Rolling Hills Golf Course and the Tempe Women's Club). Additional high priority equity zones have seen slightly less investment in its park improvements; parks such as the West-side Multi-Gen Center and Esquer Park. In tandem, significant traces of park spending has been allocated towards the creation or renovation of golf courses in both the Papago Preserve area and in the South Mountain Resorts across Interstate 10. Adjacent to the golf course in the Papago Preserve area are natural lands that have not received capital investment dollars in this time period. Coincidentally, this area has seen some encampment activities since 2016, prompting maintenance in terms of trash collection. Subsidiary improvements that prompt active trail usage or other educational or cultural programs may be explored across this 300-acre preserve. Pages 7-8 illustrates a table issuing projected or planned projects for parks across Tempe since 2015, illustrating basic amenities such as lighting being allocated for the Preserves.

Parks + Recreation Centers Equity Zones to CIP Investment Ratio

| EQUITY ZONE PARKS                         | RV POINTS 2018 | \$CIP 2015-2023 | CONDITION RATING 2023 |
|-------------------------------------------|----------------|-----------------|-----------------------|
| Escalante Park                            | 7.1            | \$              | Good                  |
| Parque de Soza (Hudson)                   | 6.8            | \$              | Fair                  |
| Alegre Park                               | n/a            | \$              | Good                  |
| Escalante Multi-gen                       | n/a            | \$              | Good                  |
| Rio-Arts Park                             | n/a            | ---             | Fair                  |
| Westside Generational Center/ Jaycee Park | 7.0            | ---             | Fair                  |
| Esquer Park                               | 4.0            | \$              | Fair                  |
| Celaya Park                               | 23.1           | \$              | Good                  |
| Estrada Park                              | 17.6           | \$              | Good                  |
| Rolling Hills Golf Course                 | n/a            | ---             | Poor                  |
| Tempe Women's Club                        | n/a            | \$              | Great                 |

Figure 2: Parks and Recreation Equity Zones to CIP Investment Ratio

Capital Investment in Parks, 2015 - 2023  
& Equity Zones Overlaid

The map below overlays the equity zones analysis map developed as part of Task 2, with the City's capital investment data. Improvements and associated cost range per park and recreation center has been illustrated to better understand whether funds have been directed in high equity priority zones.

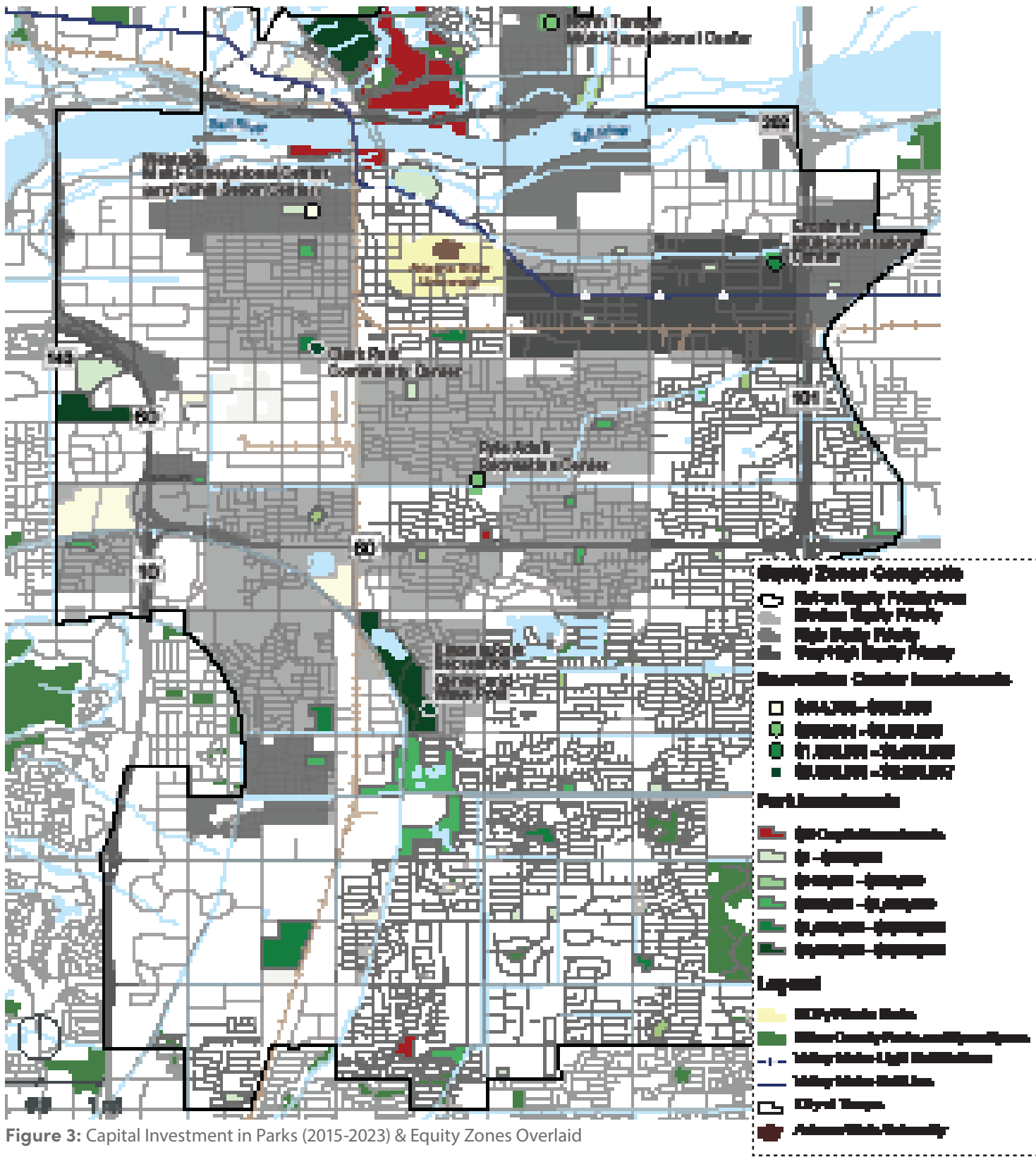


Figure 3: Capital Investment in Parks (2015-2023) & Equity Zones Overlaid

Projects Completed  
since 2015

|  |                       | FY 2022-23<br>approved | FY 2023-24<br>planned | FY 2024-25<br>planned | FY 2025-26<br>planned | FY 2026-27<br>planned | EQUITY ZONE |
|--|-----------------------|------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-------------|
|  | 6th STREET            |                        |                       |                       |                       |                       | n/a         |
|  | ALEGRE                |                        |                       |                       |                       |                       | Very high   |
|  | ARREDONDO             |                        |                       |                       |                       |                       | Medium      |
|  | BENEDICT              |                        |                       |                       |                       |                       | Medium      |
|  | BIRCHETT              |                        |                       |                       |                       |                       | none        |
|  | CAMPBELL              |                        |                       |                       |                       |                       | none        |
|  | CELAYA                |                        |                       |                       |                       |                       | High        |
|  | CLARK                 |                        |                       |                       |                       |                       | Medium      |
|  | COLE                  |                        |                       |                       |                       |                       | none        |
|  | CONNOLLY              |                        |                       |                       |                       |                       | none        |
|  | CORBELL               |                        |                       |                       |                       |                       | none        |
|  | CREAMERY              |                        |                       |                       |                       |                       | Medium      |
|  | DALEY                 |                        |                       |                       |                       |                       | none        |
|  | DAUMLER               |                        |                       |                       |                       |                       | none        |
|  | DIABLO                |                        |                       |                       |                       |                       | none        |
|  | DWIGHT                |                        |                       |                       |                       |                       | Medium      |
|  | EHRHARDT              |                        |                       |                       |                       |                       | none        |
|  | ESCALANTE             |                        |                       |                       |                       |                       | Very high   |
|  | ESQUER                |                        |                       |                       |                       |                       | High        |
|  | ESTRADA               |                        |                       |                       |                       |                       | none        |
|  | EVELYN HALLMAN        |                        |                       |                       |                       |                       | Medium      |
|  | GAICKI                |                        |                       |                       |                       |                       | none        |
|  | GIULIANO              |                        |                       |                       |                       |                       | Very high   |
|  | GOODWIN               |                        |                       |                       |                       |                       | none        |
|  | HANGER                |                        |                       |                       |                       |                       | none        |
|  | HARELSON              |                        |                       |                       |                       |                       | none        |
|  | HAYDEN BUTTE PRESERVE |                        |                       |                       |                       |                       | none        |
|  | HOLLIS                |                        |                       |                       |                       |                       | Medium      |
|  | HUDSON                |                        |                       |                       |                       |                       | Very high   |
|  | INDIAN BEND           |                        |                       |                       |                       |                       | High        |
|  | JAYCEE                |                        |                       |                       |                       |                       | High        |
|  | JOYCE                 |                        |                       |                       |                       |                       | none        |

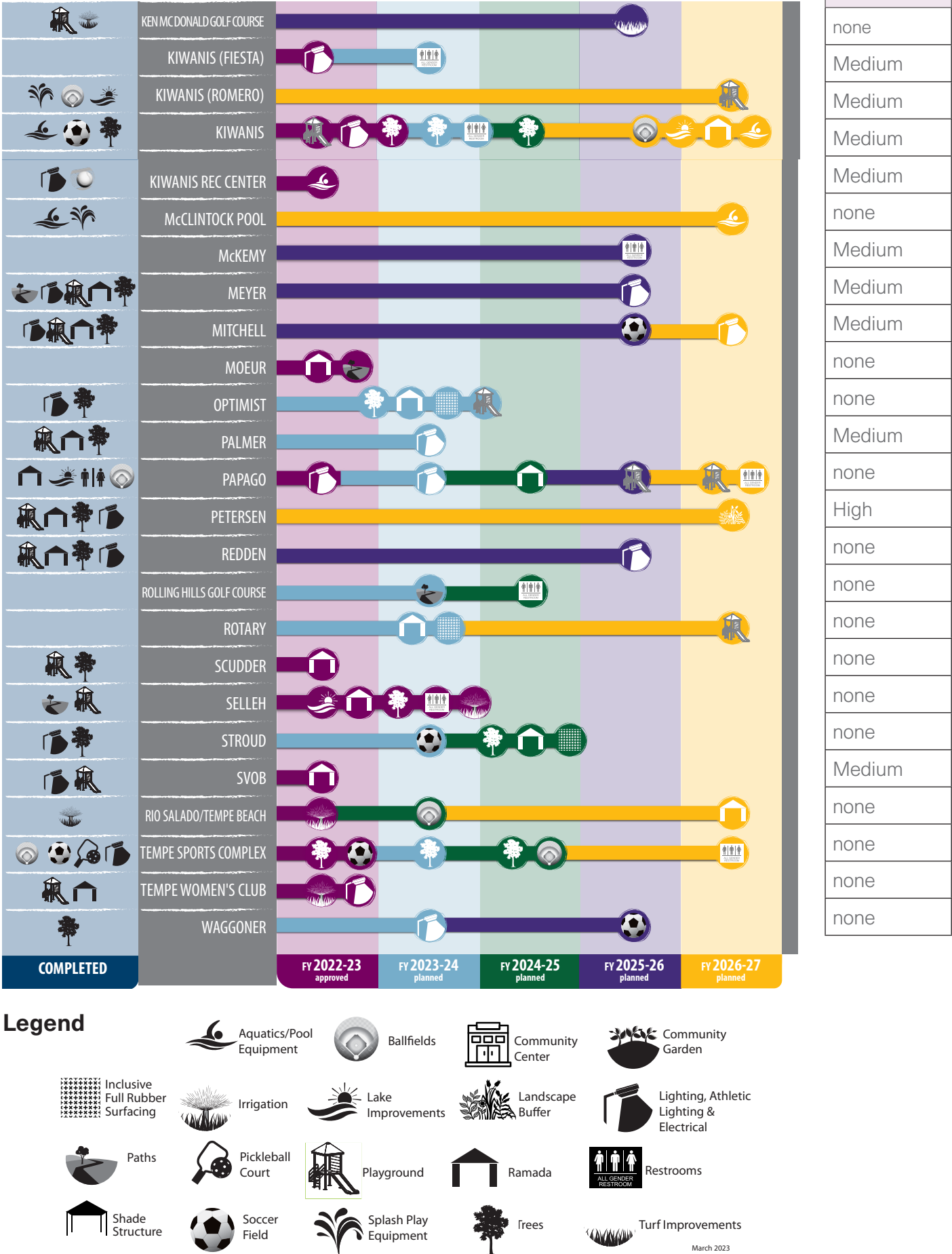
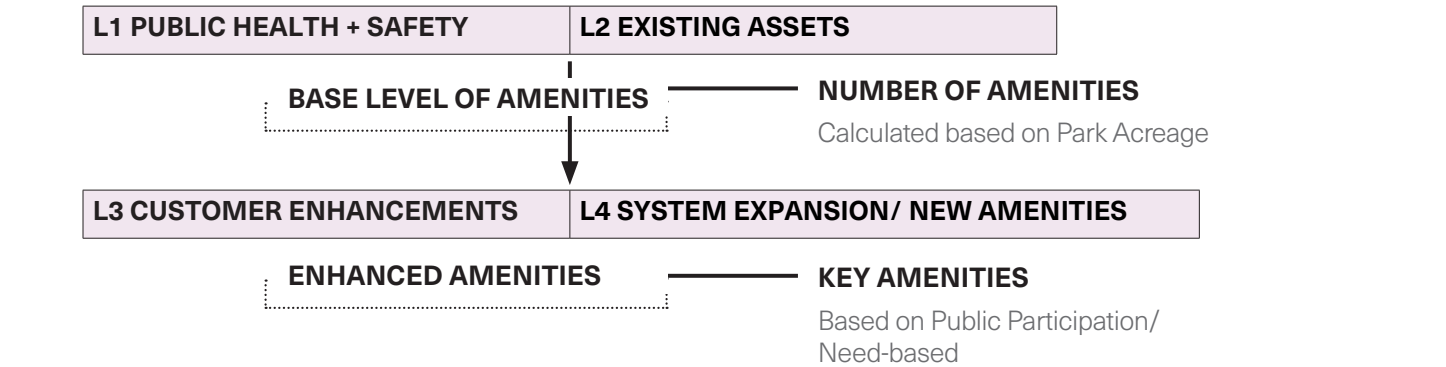


Figure 4: Completed and Planned Parks and Recreation CIP Projects since 2015

# PARKS CIP PROCESS RECOMMENDATIONS

## Current Prioritization Flowchart



## Recommended Prioritization Flowchart

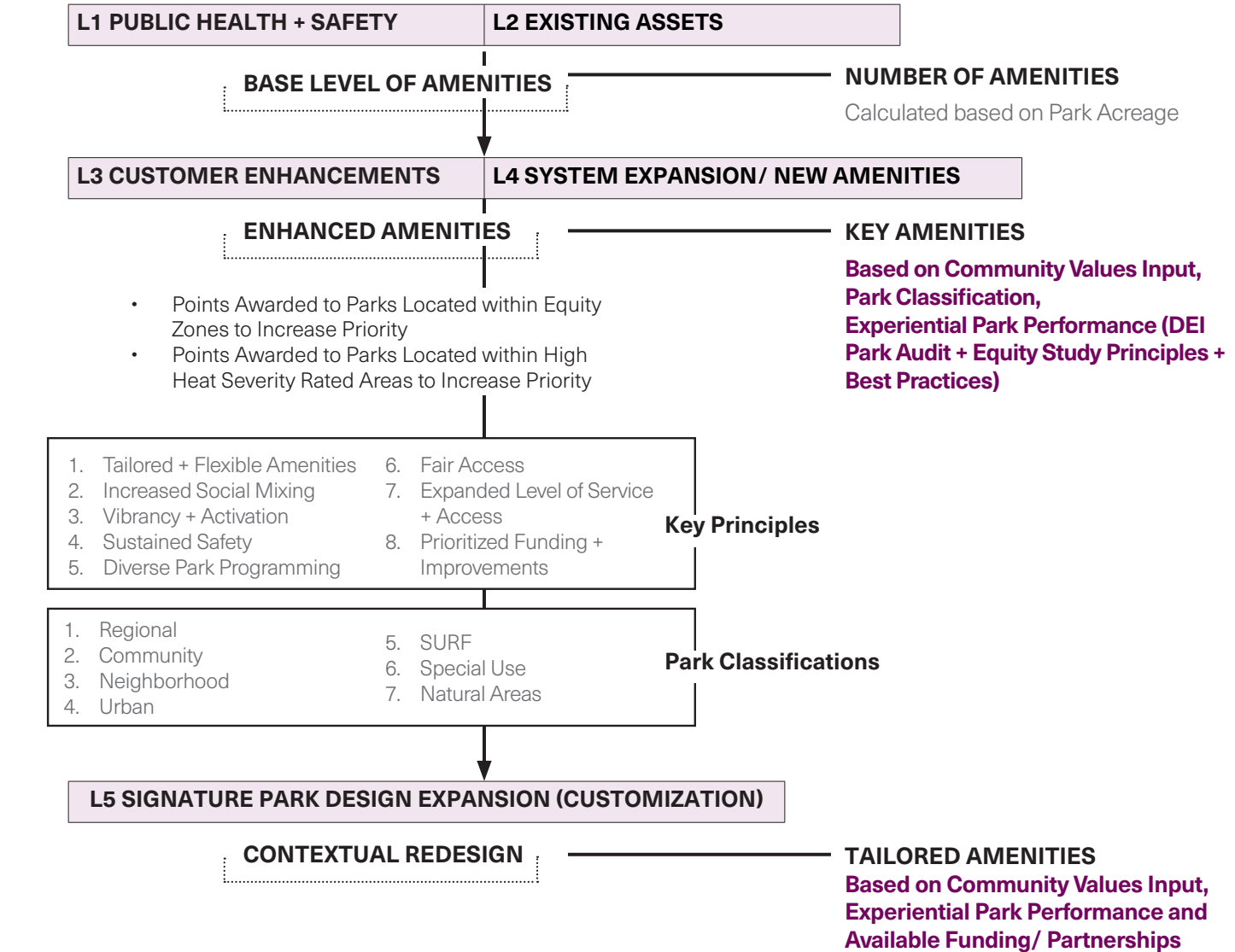


Figure 5: Current vs. Recommended Parks and Recreation Funding Process

# INVESTMENT PROCESS RECOMMENDATIONS

## Tempe Parks and Recreation Capital Investment Process Analysis and Recommendations

### 1. DIFFERENTIATING BY PARK CLASSIFICATION TYPES

**Purpose:** Positive outcomes associated with the goal that all parks with have a "baseline standard" of amenities and assets creates a system of equal parks across the system. One drawback of this parks funding prioritization method is that it assumes that all parks are considered "neighborhood" assets. Regardless of park size, large or small, parks have been characterized the same way; there is a one-size-fits-all approach to improvements, suggesting that there is limited reach and level of service for assets within a particular geography or beyond a 5-minute walking radius. For example, residents living near Kiwanis Park have less incentive to visit parks in Northeast Tempe unless they are programmed uniquely to direct regional draw.

**Method:** A critical factor in building equitable park systems is ensuring some parks, whether regional, urban or special use, integrate diverse themes and park elements that are voiced by the community. This could involve passive elements (i.e., ramadas, trails), active elements (i.e., sports courts, fishing areas, skate parks), or unique cultural elements (i.e., murals, nature-based stormwater management projects, learning centers, hubs). In particular, for example, the "preserves" were not part of the CIP process. To ensure large natural preserves such as the Papago Preserves are seen as an educational and communal asset for nature lovers, recreationalists and ecologists, dedicated funding should be available in the form of the Preserves own CIP process. Also, urban parks in the downtown need to be designed differently for intensive use and their capital improvements need to be different (See *Recommendation #3 - Creating More Identifiable Parks with Signature Amenities*).

It is important to distinguish between park classification types. While all park types should have Level 1 and 2 Base Level amenities, it is vital to also ensure amenities for Level 3 and 4 are tailored for each park classification listed below. Community or regional parks may likely integrate **key amenities** like swales or detention ponds, gardens and picnic facilities whereas urban parks, situated in a more dense part of the city would integrate programs such as splashpads and outdoor cafe spaces with food and beverage kiosks. The 2021 Parks and Recreation Master Plan defines these as:

- Regional - *(Level of service beyond a 1.0-mile reach)*
- Community - *(Level of service of a 1.0-mile reach)*

- Neighborhood - *(Level of service of a 0.5-mile reach)*
- Urban - *(Level of service of a 0.25-mile reach)*
- SURF - *(Level of service of a 0.5-mile reach)*
- Special Use - *(Level of service of a 1.0-mile reach)*
- Natural Areas - *(Level of service beyond a 1.0-mile reach)*

That being said, all Tempe parks should have some unifying elements that are identifiable and recognized as city parks. The branding of parks add to a sense of community and civic pride, encouraging resident participation and activity (See *Recommendation #3 - Creating More Identifiable Parks with Signature Amenities*).



### 2. MEASURING EQUITY BEYOND CONDITIONAL ASSESSMENT ONLY

**Purpose:** The conditional assessment is a good first step in ensuring all parks are up to a base level standard. However, to achieve higher park performance in terms of equity, key amenity enhancements for Level 3 and 4 should consider employing principles identified as part of this study. What are factors that allow a park to feel safe, active, and inclusive of everyone's backgrounds and abilities?

**Method:** Best practices to achieve each of these factors are provided in the DEI Park Performance Audit. Best practices identified in the DEI Park Performance Audit tool as well as scores from the audit should be used

as indicators for how parks are performing in terms of equity and the plan recommendations on this project.

- Increased Social Mixing
- Vibrancy + Activation
- Sustained Safety
- Diverse Park Programming
- Fair Access,
- Expanded Level of Service + Access
- Prioritized Funding + Improvements

It is also important to note that equity does not necessarily mean equal. Urgent and higher levels of investment will be needed in high equity zones to address historic injustices and current health and economic disparities.



**3. CREATING IDENTIFIABLE PARKS WITH SIGNATURE AMENITIES**

**Purpose:** Tempe parks are generally adequate in terms of its operations, maintenance, upkeep and basic amenities. But a Level 5 criteria may be added: Signature Park Design Expansion or Customization. This level for park improvement provides investment that speaks to civic pride and community ownership and will ensure a park is identifiable as a place distinctive to not only the community surrounding it but to the City at large and that the user experience is varied. In other words, a park should

be identifiable as a "Tempe" park or even a "North Tempe" park. Are all playgrounds alike? Are all basketball courts or soccerfields alike? Different ideas for the layout, footprint and spatial orientation of park recreation features should be explored during the engagement and design process. What makes this park special from others? Historically branded spaces, custom-design nature play zones, mural stations, meditation gardens, outdoor reading rooms or classrooms, community garden or food coops are a few examples.

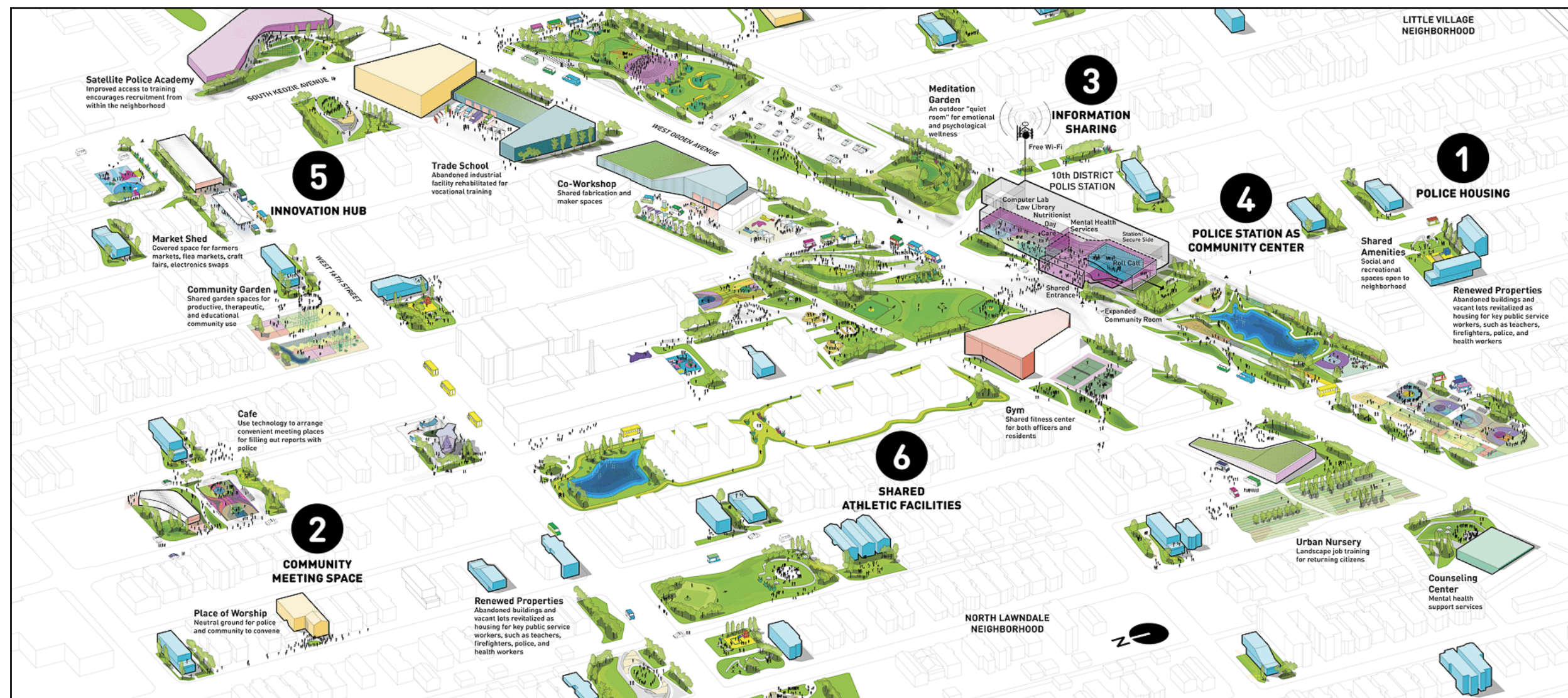
**Method:** Basis for design should come from the community that evaluates:

- Safe public use ideas - minimizing hiding areas, integrating unique lighting features, local safety centers in and around park (fire, police, emergency personnel)
- Park beautification ideas - placemaking as a technique where park beautification celebrates a sense of place through local art, environmental health (green infrastructure) and community education/ employment hubs

The example below on page 12-13 illustrates a process by which a community came together to redesign the role of police stations and other emergency services centers, rethinking the grouping of park programming and integrating unique concepts of park amenities as part of a robust community engagement process.

All of this helps to respond to a community's unique identity, context and local culture. Directing funds to planning and design for parks and recreation centers to capture local identity and aesthetics will bolsters communal pride and stewardship. Strategies to accomplish for specific Tempe parkare in equity zones are listed below.

1. Finance local and youth-driven art to engage Tempe citizens which will draw participation from a diverse group of people.
2. Celebrate diversity and inclusion through programming incentives such as markets, festivals, and performances.
3. Invest in urban parks and plazas for intercultural interactions.
4. Advance local preservation initiatives, garnering funds to revitalize historic public assets within parks and recreational facilities.
5. Integrate communal programs around food and beverage that not only boost the local economy, but promotes cultural diversity in parks through uses such as food markets, food trucks, food halls, outdoor cafes and community gardens.



**Figure 6: The Police Station** case study by Studio Gang researches ways to integrate park and civic experiences with safety institutions. Distinctive programming such as counseling centers, meditation gardens, community centers with police stations and housing, tradeschools and local markets are explored.





# **making space:**

AN EQUITY STUDY FOR  
PARKS AND RECREATION

## **CIP Process Analysis + Recommendations Memo**

Prepared for the City of Tempe, Arizona

**DESIGNWORKSHOP**

| <b>EQUITY ZONE PARKS</b>                  | <b>RV POINTS 2018</b> | <b>\$CIP 2015-2023</b> | <b>CONDITION RATING 2023</b> |
|-------------------------------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|------------------------------|
| Escalante Park                            | <b>7.1</b>            | <b>\$</b>              | <b>Good</b>                  |
| Parque de Soza (Hudson)                   | <b>6.8</b>            | <b>\$</b>              | <b>Fair</b>                  |
| Alegre Park                               | <b>n/a</b>            | <b>\$</b>              | <b>Good</b>                  |
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| Tempe Woman's Club                        | <b>n/a</b>            | <b>\$</b>              | <b>Great</b>                 |