



**HAPPY BIRTHDAY CIRCLE** CONCEPT DESIGN  
*Waterfront Park, Louisville, Kentucky*

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## DESIGN CONCEPT OVERVIEW

The Happy Birthday Circle celebrates the legacy of Mildred and Patty Hill, notable for their contributions to the field of early childhood education and their composition of the song 'Happy Birthday To You', the most frequently sung song in the English language. Located within the Big Four Bridge area of Waterfront Park, the public venue is comprised of three elements which take advantage of existing park geometries and features: 1) Pavilion, 2) Memorial, and 3) Picnic Grove. Together, these elements provide a series of flexible public spaces for gathering, play and contemplation.

**PAVILION:** The Pavilion is a playful element located under the elevated 'disc' of the Big Four Bridge ramp. Rising to a height of 35', the structure provides an iconic presence that is visible from many vantage points, including the nearby elevated highway. Composed of custom stainless steel ribbons, the Pavilion abstractly recalls elements found in sheet music and musical notation, as well as river motifs such as ripples. At night, the Pavilion transforms into a lantern through integrated lighting.

**MEMORIAL:** The Memorial is composed of two cylindrical buildings of weathering steel that tell the narrative of the Hill sisters and their important legacy. Service amenities are housed within the two structures, including drinking fountains, restrooms, catering prep area, and storage. Beside the memorial is a ring of contrabass chimes that encourage play through music; they can be struck to produce different notes and visitors can even play "Happy Birthday To You."

**PICNIC GROVE:** The Picnic Grove is a tree-shaded area with clusters of curved 'banquet' picnic tables, providing flexible opportunities for gathering.



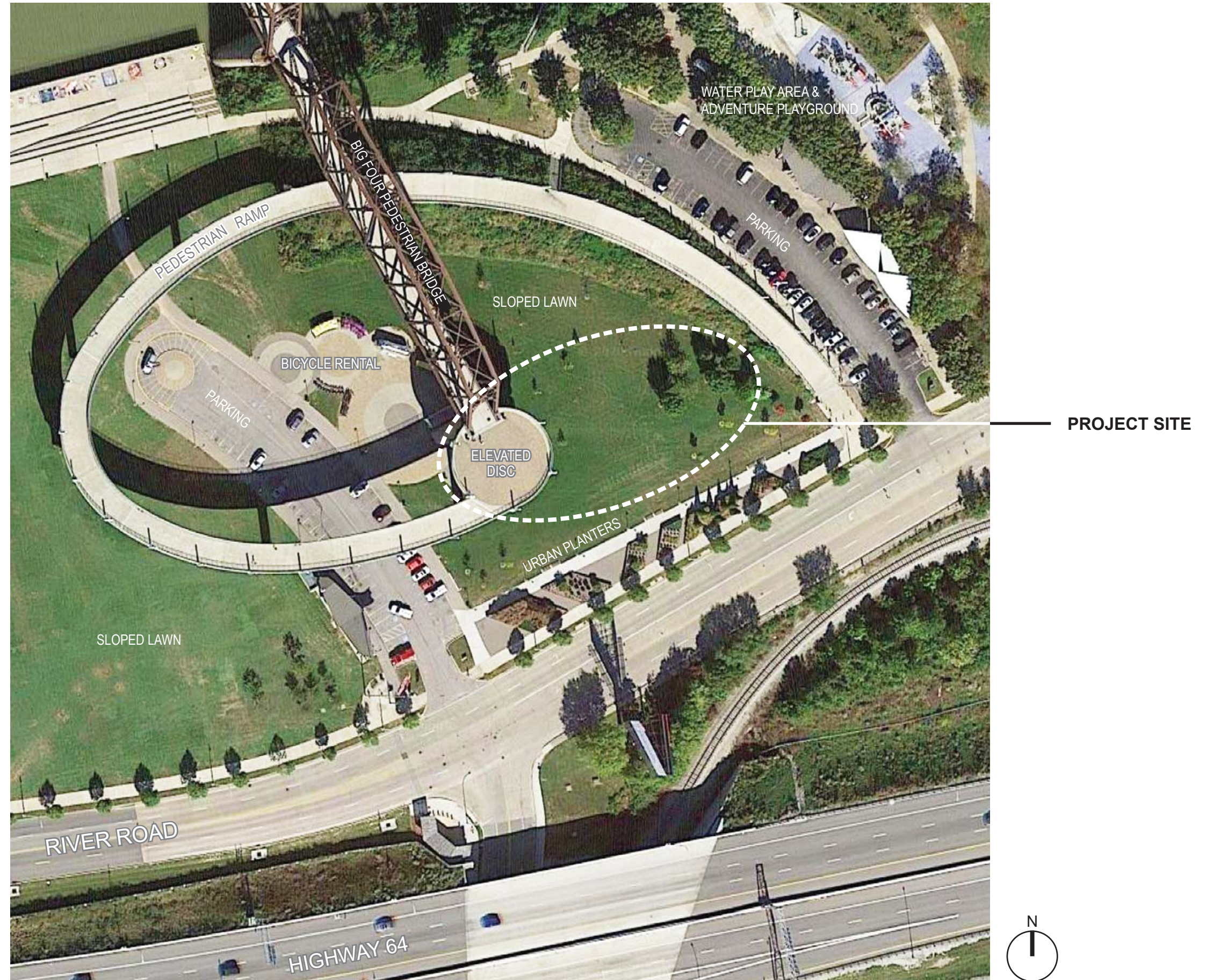


## EXISTING SITE CHARACTERISTICS

### LOUISVILLE WATERFRONT PARK: BIG FOUR BRIDGE AREA *Existing Site Elements & Features*

The Big Four Bridge area of Louisville Waterfront Park is characterized by numerous features and public amenities that include parking, restrooms, bicycle rental, and walking paths. The defining feature of this area is the Big Four Pedestrian Bridge and the spiraling ramp that provides access to an elevated disc platform.

The specific project site is an elliptical zone on a gently sloping lawn that is highly visible from many vantage points, including a nearby elevated highway. This context offers the opportunity for a project site that has no 'front' or 'back', while also being visible from above.



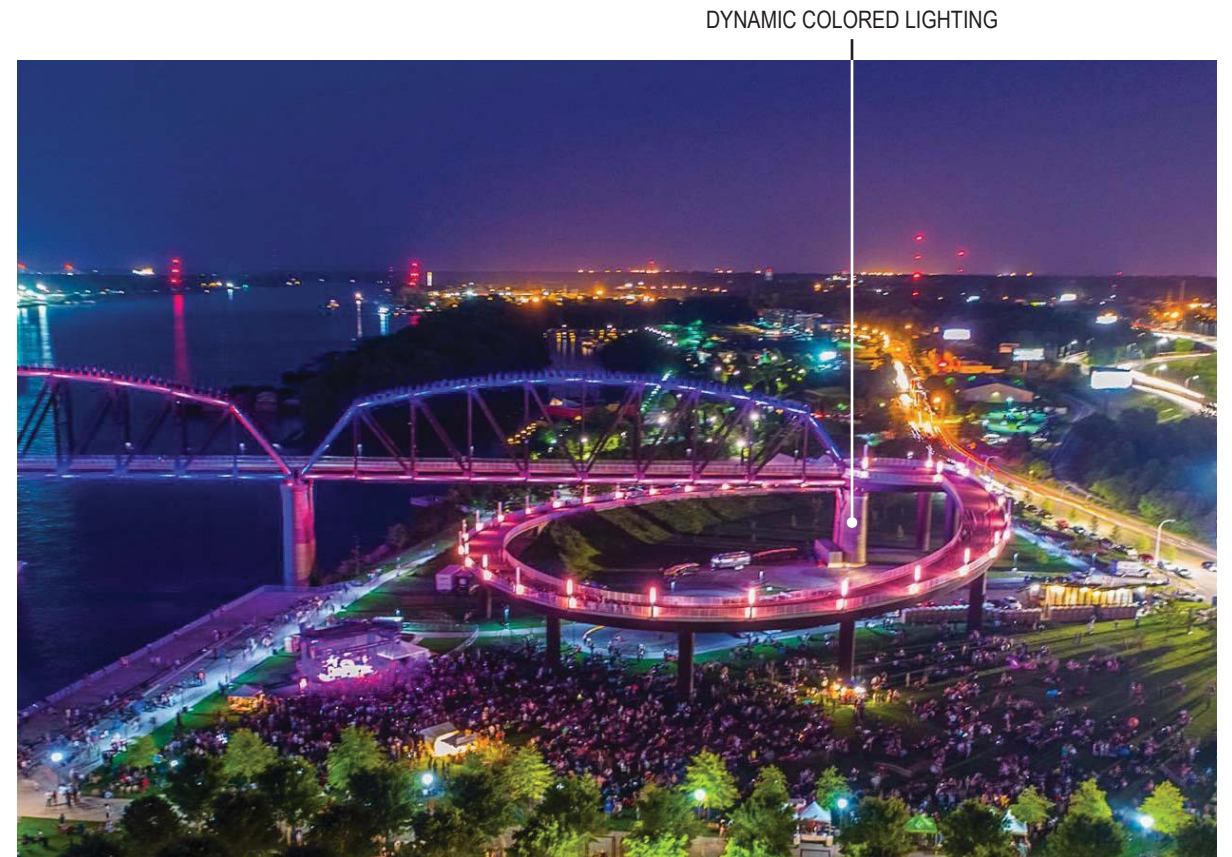
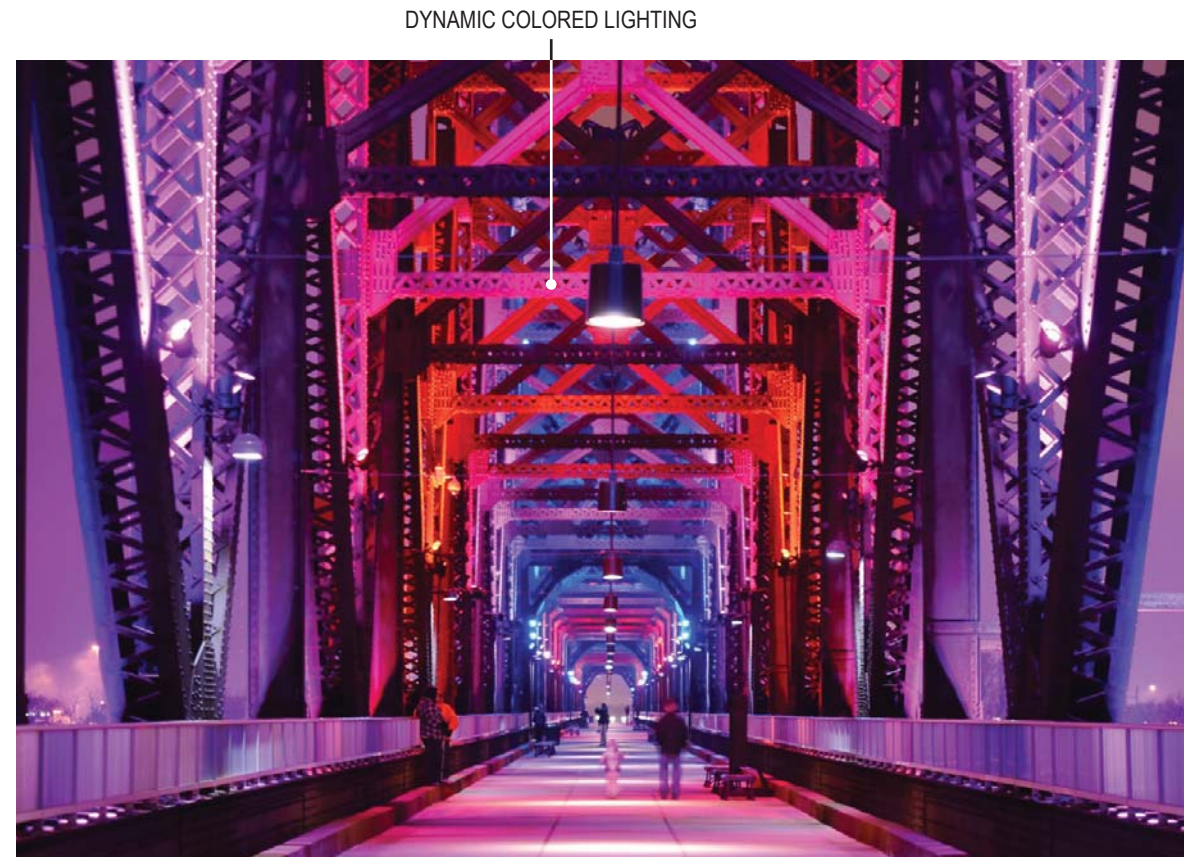


# EXISTING SITE CHARACTERISTICS

## LOUISVILLE WATERFRONT PARK *Primary Existing Site Materials*

The Big Four Bridge area contains a collection of existing materials both natural and man-made, in a range of colors, textures and finishes. Some, like weathering steel, transform over time through aging. Plantings and landscaping change with the seasonal cycles.

Perhaps the most dramatic shift occurs between day and night - with dynamic LED lighting transforming the evening context into a kaleidoscope of colors.





## CONCEPTUAL PRECEDENTS

The project is inspired by conceptual precedents that focus on the legacy of Mildred and Patty Hill, their important contributions to early childhood education, and the profound impact of their composition of the Happy Birthday song.



### THE HILL SISTERS

Mildred & Patty Hill

### EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

Learning  
Play  
Improvisation  
Creativity  
Nature

### THE SONG

Happy Birthday To You  
Music / Melody / Rhythm / Harmony  
Pattern  
Local / Global



## MATERIAL CONSIDERATIONS

Within the highly public context of Waterfront Park, material considerations emphasize durability, ease of maintenance and sustainability. Weathering steel and mirror-polished stainless steel fit seamlessly into the existing material palette of the park.



MIRROR-POLISHED STAINLESS STEEL

- Low Maintenance
- Durable
- 100% Recyclable



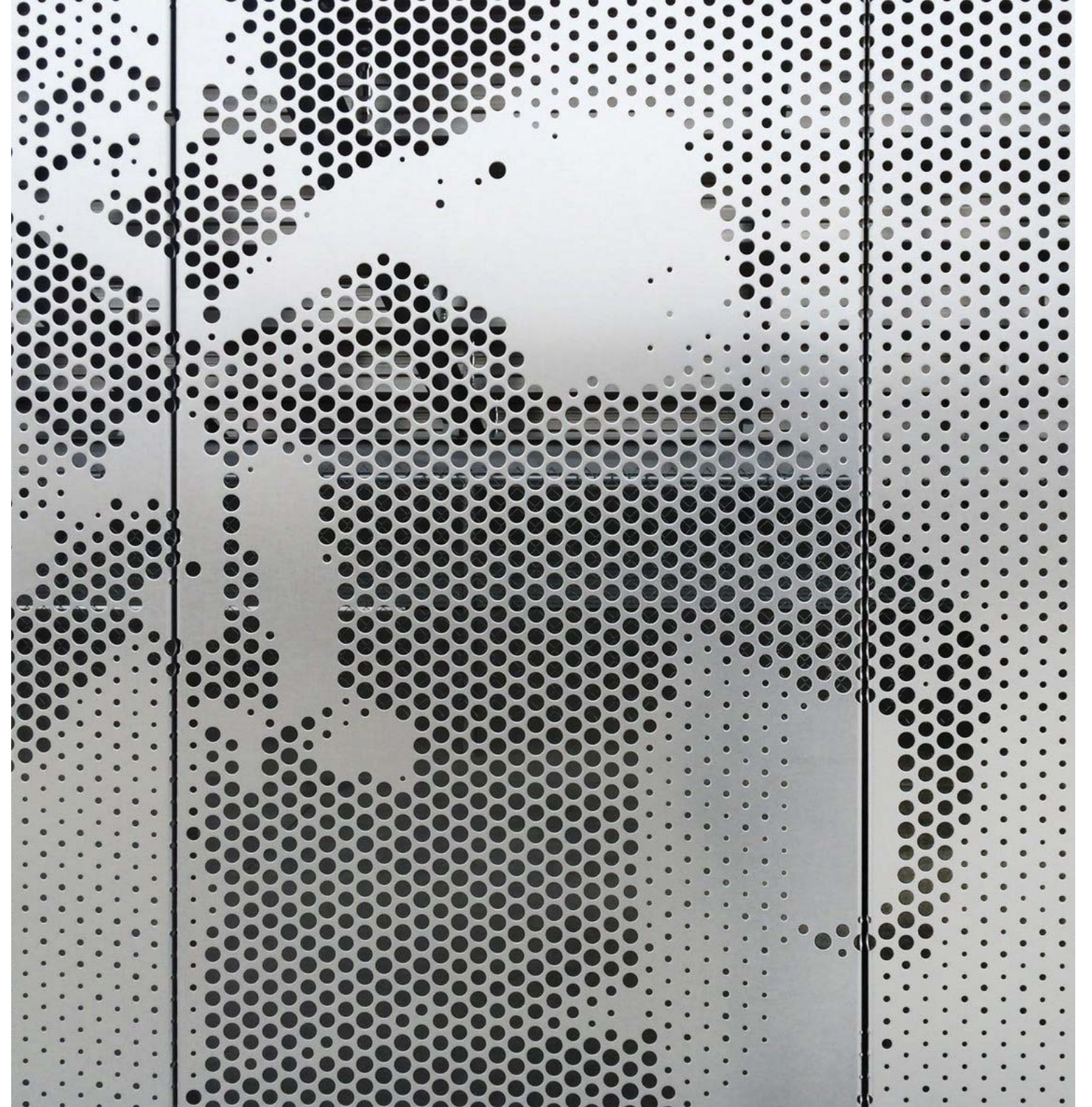
WEATHERING STEEL

- Low Maintenance
- Durable
- Graffiti-resistant
- Made From Pre and Post Consumer Recycled Steel
- 100% Recyclable



## MATERIAL CONSIDERATIONS

Metal fabrication techniques, such as custom perforation and laser cutting, allow for large-scale graphic opportunities that include dot-matrix imaging and signage.





# CONCEPT DESIGN

## AREA PLAN

The Happy Birthday Circle occupies an elliptical zone within the Big Four Bridge area of Waterfront Park, and is comprised of three primary elements: Pavilion, Memorial, and Picnic Grove.





## CONCEPT DESIGN

### SITE PLAN: PAVILION AREA

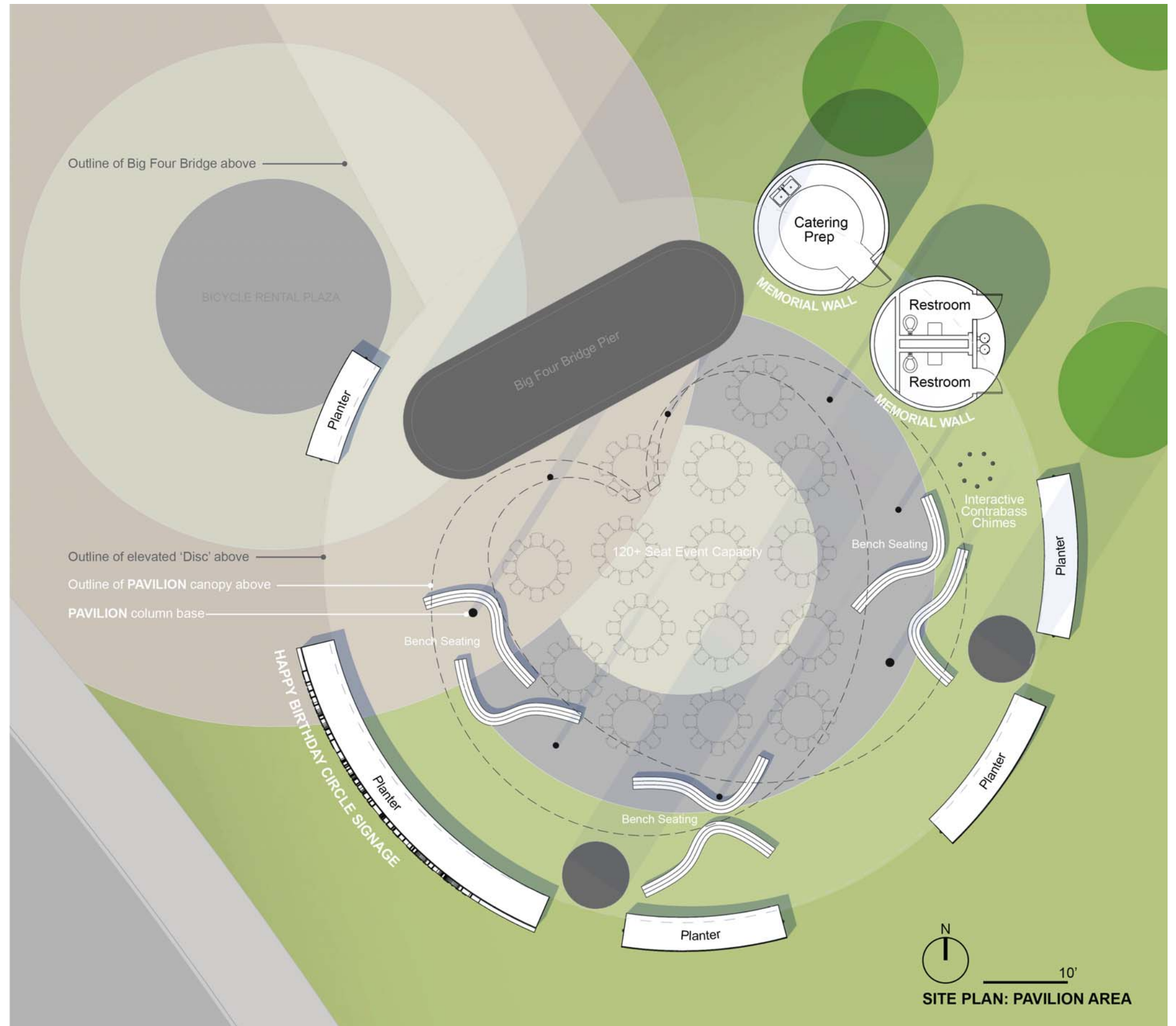
The 'Pavilion' area is comprised of multiple components that reside underneath the elevated 'disc' of the Big Four Bridge overlook platform, and utilizes the geometry of the existing circular paving at ground level. Taking advantage of this unique context, these elements work in concert to define an interactive event area that can adapt to various functions and activities. The paved area can easily accommodate over 120 guests.

**PAVILION:** The Pavilion is an iconic element that serves as the defining feature of the Happy Birthday Circle. Rising to a height of 35', the Pavilion is comprised of five twisting ribbons of mirror-polished stainless steel supported on weathering steel columns. Deliberately abstract and playful, the Pavilion invites interpretation (it can be understood as sheet music, as water ripples, as kite tails in a breeze, as a representation of community, as infinity, etc.), but it can also be understood more literally as a reflection of its immediate context.

**PLANTERS:** Multiple curved planters of various lengths in weathering steel physically encircle the Pavilion area to roughly delineate an event/celebration zone. The planters provide a seasonally changing source of plantings that engage the senses (textures, scents, colors) and offer the possibility to cordon off the Pavilion area for private events. Incorporating large-scale signage (a 3-dimensional 'Instagrammable' marquee of the 'Happy Birthday Circle' letters), the planters also provide a porous visual boundary that reinforces inclusion and community.

**BENCH SEATING:** Curvilinear 'squiggly' benches (recalling abstract ribbons of DNA strands or garden caterpillars) invite play, exploration and pause/rest. Their vibrant green color offers a cheerful graphic when seen from above. During evening hours, the benches transform into lanterns through concealed LED linear lighting.

**MEMORIAL:** Two cylindrical buildings clad in weathering steel provide large-scale surfaces that commemorate the Hill sisters through portraiture and narrative. Depicted through a custom-perforated pattern image translation of a historic photograph, Mildred and Patty Hill appear larger-than-life within the public space that celebrates their legacy. Programmatically, the cylindrical buildings house a catering prep area, restrooms and drinking fountains that are accessible during private functions.





## CONCEPT DESIGN

### SITE PLAN: PICNIC GROVE AREA

The 'Picnic Grove' offers a tree-shaded area with fixed picnic tables in a variety of configurations for gatherings both large and small. Reinterpreting the picnic tables that currently exist within Waterfront Park, the design challenges expectations of what a 'picnic area' can be and how it might be used - transforming conventional picnic tables into something extraordinary through geometry, scale and proximity. Ordinary picnic tables are re-imagined as curvilinear 'banquet' tables of various lengths and adjacencies, encouraging the community to envision expanded possibilities of 'gathering'.

Existing Waterfront Park fixed picnic tables





## CONCEPT DESIGN

### VIEW FROM RIVER ROAD:

The Pavilion is highly visible from River Road, the primary vehicular access to the Happy Birthday Circle area. The existing 'urban planters' provide a porous sidewalk edge to the south.





CONCEPT DESIGN

**VIEW FROM PARKING LOT ENTRY:**

Entry into the Happy Birthday Circle is highlighted by monumental signage incorporated into the circular weathering steel planters. The twisting geometry of the Pavilion ribbons changes from different vantage points.





CONCEPT DESIGN

**VIEW FROM SOUTH LAWN:**

Multiple elements define the Happy Birthday Circle underneath the Big Four Bridge: Pavilion, Memorial, Planters, and Benches. Together, they offer a variety of experiences and opportunities to gather, play and learn.





## CONCEPT DESIGN

### VIEW FROM SOUTH LAWN (EVENING):

During evening hours, the Happy Birthday Circle transforms into a playfully lit zone. The colorful curvilinear benches, with integrated LED lighting, create graphic patterns on the ground plane that are especially dramatic when viewed from above on the elevated pedestrian ramp. The mirror-polished ribbons of the Pavilion reflect and distort the surrounding dynamic lighting of the Big Four Bridge area.





## CONCEPT DESIGN

### VIEW OF MEMORIAL:

A pair of cylindrical buildings clad in weathering steel panels feature a monumental portrait of Mildred and Patty Hill, along with supporting narrative about their legacy. The portrait image, derived from an early photograph of the sisters, is created by a custom perforation pattern integrated into the weathering steel panels.

Interactive contrabass chimes, located next to the memorial, invite play through music.





## CONCEPT DESIGN

### VIEW FROM THE PICNIC GROVE:

Integrated with the park's existing shade trees, curvilinear fixed picnic tables in various lengths and groupings provide flexible opportunities to gather. The area anchors the eastern boundary of the Happy Birthday Circle.

