



# Heritage Preservation Commission

Thursday, September 11, 2025

6:30 PM

Elk River City Hall

## Special Meeting Agenda

Uppertown Conference Room

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1. CALL MEETING TO ORDER

2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

3. CONSIDER AGENDA

4. CONSIDER MINUTES

4.1 July 17, 2025, Meeting Minutes

5. GENERAL BUSINESS

Items in which the information is presented by city staff or consultants, then deliberation and action occur. General Business items are not opportunities to receive or provide public input. However, the presiding officer may, at its sole discretion, solicit public feedback.

5.1 Elk River Water Tower Historic Site

6. MOTION TO ADJOURN



**Meeting of the Elk River  
Heritage Preservation Commission  
Held at the Elk River City Hall  
Thursday, July 17, 2025**

Members Present: Chair Lance Lindberg, Commissioners Linda Campbell, Jayne Dietz, Zachary Griffiths, and Gavin Tuckey

Members Absent: None

Council Liaison: Councilmember J. Brian Calva

Staff Present: Community Development Director Zack Carlton, Park & Recreation Manager Jeff Shelby

Others Present: Sandy Meulners-Comstock, Mend Collaborative

**1. Call Meeting to Order**

Pursuant to due call and notice thereof, the meeting of the Elk River Heritage Preservation Commission was called to order at 6:00 p.m. by Chair Lindberg.

**2. Pledge of Allegiance**

Chair Lindberg led the commission in the Pledge of Allegiance.

**3. Consider Agenda**

Moved by Commissioner Dietz and seconded by Commissioner Griffiths to approve the July 17, 2025, Heritage Preservation Commission agenda.

Motion carried 5-0.

**4. Consider Minutes**

Moved by Commissioner Campbell and seconded by Commissioner Griffiths to approve the May 15, 2025, Heritage Preservation Commission minutes.

Motion carried 5-0.

**5.1 Historic Water Tower Park**

Mr. Carlton stated a subcommittee has been working to kick off the project and start collecting official public feedback.

**Sandy Meulners-Comstock, Mend Collaborative**, gave a presentation on the project progress. She outlined design considerations including historic sensitivity, accessibility, landscaping and green space, sustainability, and generational stewardship. The water tower site is listed on the historic register.

Ms. Meulners-Comstock asked the Commission for feedback on the proposed vision statement and goals.

Working Vision Statement:

The water tower historic park or site is a welcoming community space that celebrates the iconic water tower, local heritage, and every day gathering. It is designed for all ages. It supports connection, play, events, and ecological systems while reflecting the spirit of the community.

Goals:

1. To ensure that Elk River's history is celebrated through storytelling, art, and interpretive design.
2. To make sure that this future park or site is a symbolic place for the community of Elk River and that it's also welcoming and inclusive and accessible for all ages and abilities to experience and enjoy.

Ms. Meulners-Comstock stated the Heritage Preservation Commission would be hosting a booth at Elk RiverFest on Saturday, July 26, 2025, as well as the Elk River Farmer's Market on July 31, 2025.

Mr. Carlton asked the Commission if they wanted to consider the water tower site as part of a series of locations along a historic walking tour of Elk River. The water tower site could be the start or end of the tour and could include different parts of Elk River's history at each stop. Additional stops could include Bailey Point, Houlton, or the Rivers Edge Commons.

Commissioner Campbell liked the idea that locations wouldn't be isolated but part of a system. She asked if there was a trail system to connect the historic locations. Mr. Carlton stated most of the sites would be connected with sidewalks, but the Commission could examine gaps in the pedestrian system as a future project.

Council Liaison Member Calva suggested a map or diagram on the kiosks to show "you are here".

Ms. Meulners-Comstock commented that the City of Delano has an example of a downtown area with medallions at certain locations where you can scan a QR code to learn more.

Commissioner Campbell suggested each stop include a brass rubbing. Ms. Meulners-Comstock suggested a passport.

Commissioner Griffiths added that, if a passport was of interest, the water tower may be a good starting point and could potentially stock passports.

Ms. Meulners-Comstock asked if the Commission wanted to tell a "broader story" at the water tower site or focus on the water tower site itself. Commissioner Calva liked the idea of the water tower including things that aren't specific to the trail or site such as old schoolhouses located in Elk River. Commissioner Campbell stated that the community may want input on how much history to tell. There is space at the water tower site to include more history.

Commissioner Campbell asked about the amount of historical content currently at Rivers Edge Commons park. Mr. Carlton stated that content is changeable.

Chair Lindberg stated that the water tower site could discuss the businesses downtown and where businesses moved after the fire.



Mr. Carlton asked if the Commission liked the idea of incorporating fire and water into the design. Ms. Meulners-Comstock commented that theme could be conveyed through art or plants.

Commissioner Campbell asked if the Elk River fire department may want to have input on the history of the fire or have historic items to display.

Commissioner Dietz added that there are historic hitching posts that could be installed on the site.

Ms. Meulners-Comstock reviewed the materials that would be brought to Elk RiverFest and the Farmer's Market which would ask residents their opinion on that they wanted to see at the site.

Commissioner Dietz asked if there would be some sort of fence or screening to protect neighboring properties from any lights installed at the water tower site.

Ms. Meulners-Comstock showed the Commission the website that was created for the project which includes an interactive map where people can share their concerns, ideas, or photos as well as take a survey. She stated, once the two engagement events are completed, she would create a summary of public feedback.

Mr. Carlton discussed the potential of a special meeting in September.

## **5.2 Farmer's Market Booth – July 31**

Mr. Carlton stated the Commissioners could volunteer for a shift at Elk RiverFest or the Farmer's Market at the Heritage Preservation Commission booth.

## **5.3 Other Business**

Mr. Carlton asked if any of the Commissioners would like to attend the Preserve Minnesota Conference in New Ulm on September 10-12, 2025. Commissioner Dietz was interested and Commissioner Campbell was potentially interested.

## **6. Adjournment**

**Moved by Commissioner Dietz and seconded by Commissioner Campbell to adjourn the meeting of the Heritage Preservation Commission.**

**Motion carried 5-0.**

The meeting adjourned at 6:55 p.m.

Minutes prepared by Katie Porath.

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Lance Lindberg, Chair



Tina Allard, City Clerk

DRAFT





# Request for Action

**To**  
Heritage Preservation Commission

**Item Number**  
5.1

**Meeting Date**  
September 11, 2025

**Prepared By**  
Zack Carlton, Community Development Director

**Item Description**  
Elk River Water Tower Historic Site

**Reviewed by**  
Zack Carlton

## Action Requested

Review the conceptual plans and provide direction to staff and the consultant as the project moves towards final design.

## Background/Discussion

The Elk River Water Tower Historic Site Committee has been working with Mend Collaborative on conceptual site plans which build on the commission's discussion from July 17, 2025. The group also incorporated feedback from the public which had been gathered from a booth at the Elk River Farmer's Market, Elk RiverFest, and through an online survey.

The consultant and city staff will also host a booth at the farmer's market immediately prior to the HPC meeting where the concept plans will be put on display for review by the public. Feedback from the public and the commission will be incorporated into a final design for review by the public, HPC, and City Council in October.

Examples of the farmer's market display boards are attached.

## Financial Impact

The current design effort is funded within the CIP.

## Mission/Policy/Goal

Reflect the culture of citizens and what is important.

## Attachments

- I. Water Tower Site Concept Boards

## The Elk River Vision

*A welcoming community with revolutionary and spirited resourcefulness, exceptional service, and community engagement that encourages and inspires prosperity*





# Elk River Water Tower Historic Site



## Project Overview

The City of Elk River and its Heritage Preservation Commission are embarking on a plan to **envision the future of the city's water tower site**. Situated below Elk River's famous water tower, listed on the National Register of Historic Places, **this project aims to transform the one-quarter acre parcel into a well-designed and accessible site for history storytelling**. This future history-centered site will enhance the surrounding environment, honor the historical significance of the water tower and the city, and explore the history of Elk River through a process that involves residents.



## Project Goals

- Elk River's history is celebrated through storytelling, art, and interpretive design.
- The site is a symbolic place for the community of Elk River.
- The site is welcoming, inclusive, and accessible for all ages and abilities to experience and enjoy.
- The site is a key stop along a future Elk River Heritage Walk, connecting various historic sites throughout the city.

## Project Vision Statement

Water Tower Historic Site is a welcoming community space that celebrates the iconic water tower, local heritage, and everyday gathering. Designed for all ages, it supports connection, play, events, and ecological systems while reflecting the spirit of the community.

## Timeline

- ✓ **Phase 1 - Understand**  
July 2025  
In this phase, the project team is beginning to lay the groundwork for understanding the Water Tower Historic Site and the history of Elk River.
- ★ **Phase 2 - Envision**  
August through September 2025  
In this phase, various ideas for the Water Tower Historic Site will be developed and brought to the community for input.
- ★ **Phase 3 - Act**  
October 2025  
In this final phase, the complete vision plan for the future of the Water Tower Historic Site will be detailed out, ready for implementation and final sign-off!

## Project Website

A project website has been set up to communicate key dates and project information about the water tower site. Please visit the website through the URL below, or by scanning the QR code!

<https://engage.mendcollaborative.com/water-tower>

or scan here:

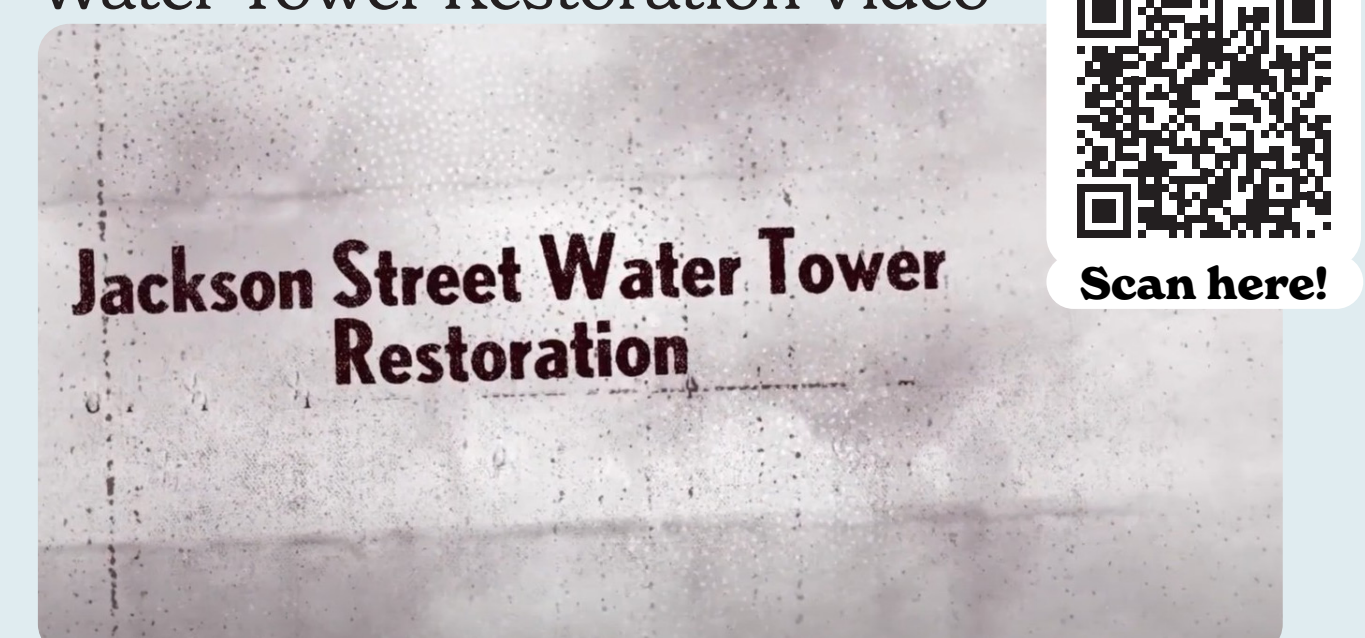


## More Fun Information

History of the Water Tower Video



Water Tower Restoration Video





# Elk River Water Tower Historic Site



## What did we hear?

Through online and in-person engagement, we heard from many residents about their vision for the site! See the events held below, and the results from what we heard!

### Online Activities 288 visitors

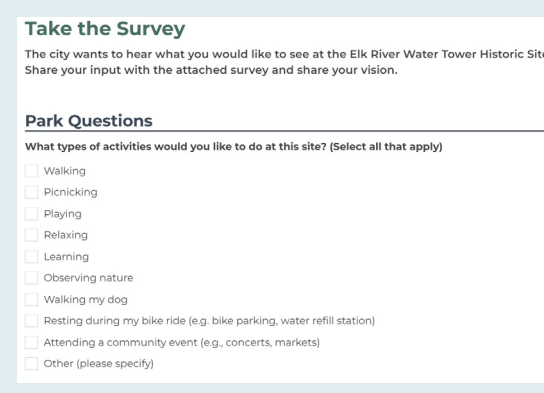
#### Social Map 6 contributions



Online map to add ideas and insights about the existing site and future designs.

\* closed August 31st

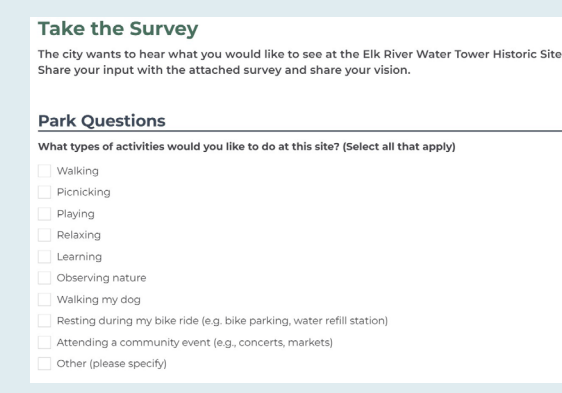
#### Survey 27 responses



Online survey to capture preferences and ideas about the future site.

\* closed August 31st

#### Quick Poll 15 responses



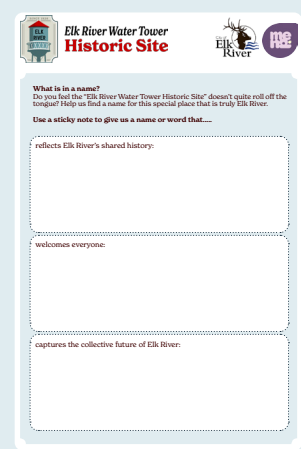
What excites you most about the future site?

\* closed August 31st

### In-Person Activities

**Elk Riverfest Pop-up**  
July 26th, 2025

**Farmers Market Pop-up** 100+ attendees  
August 31st, 2025



#### Give us a name or word that...

reflects Elk River's shared history:

- Jackson Street Water Tower
- Water Tower Park

welcomes everyone:

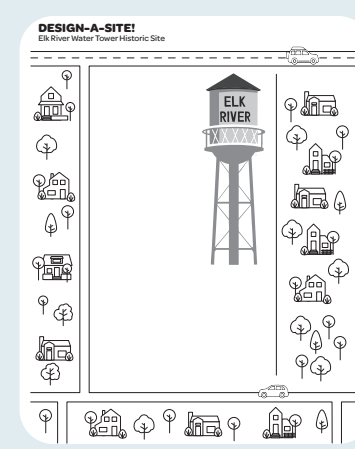
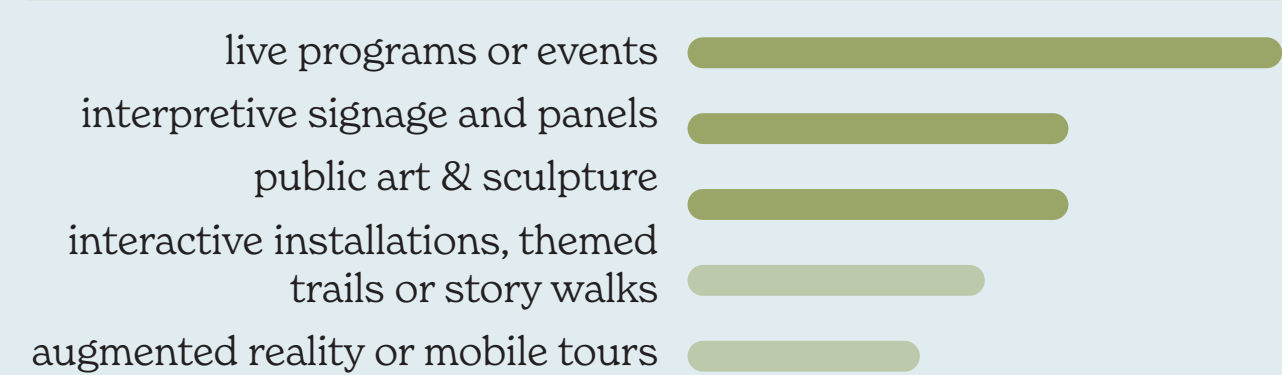
- The Imagination Park
- Water Tower Welcome Plaza
- The Best Park
- Exploration Park
- Watershed Tower Park
- School Park

captures the collective future of Elk River:

- Water Tower Fun Park!

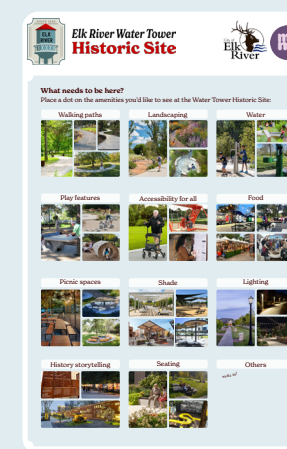


#### How should history be told?

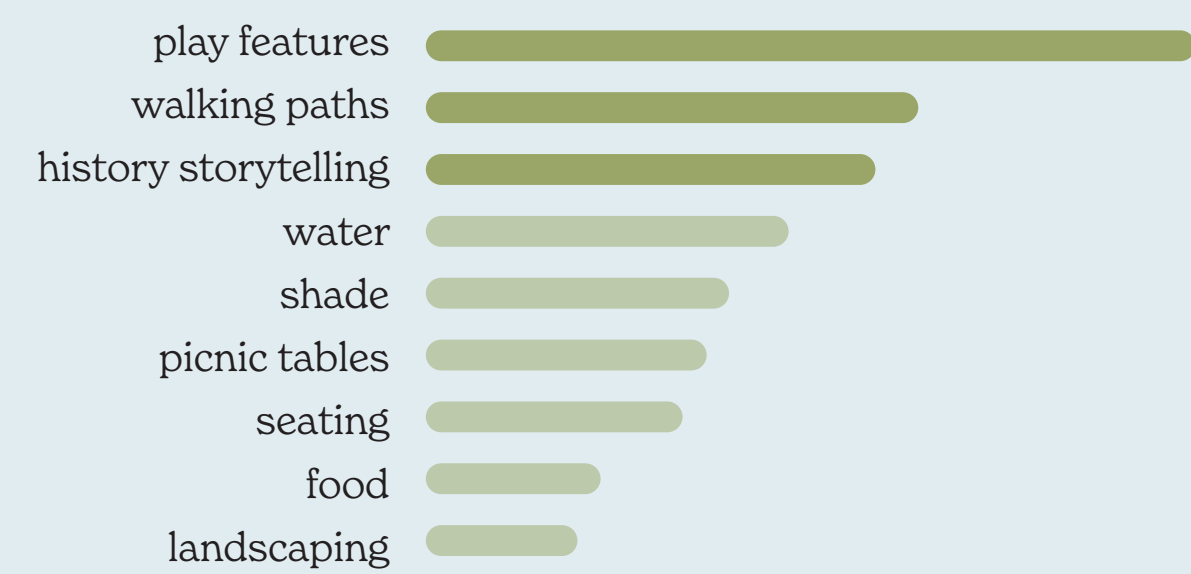


#### Design-a-site!

Draw what you'd like to see on the water tower site.



#### What needs to be here?



## Results:

### What needs to be here?

- Play
- Pathways
- History & Storytelling

### How should history be told?

- Live programs or events
- Interpretive signage and panels
- Public art & Sculpture

### What do you want this place to be?

A place to celebrate and preserve Elk River's historic water tower as a symbol of community pride—sharing stories of Elk River's history, as well as educational information about the water tower.

### Main programmatic elements:

- Space for small gatherings and learning sessions
- History interpretation and education
- Plantings
- Pathways
- Public art





# Elk River Water Tower Historic Site



## Concept Idea 1: Journey



**What is missing from this concept?**

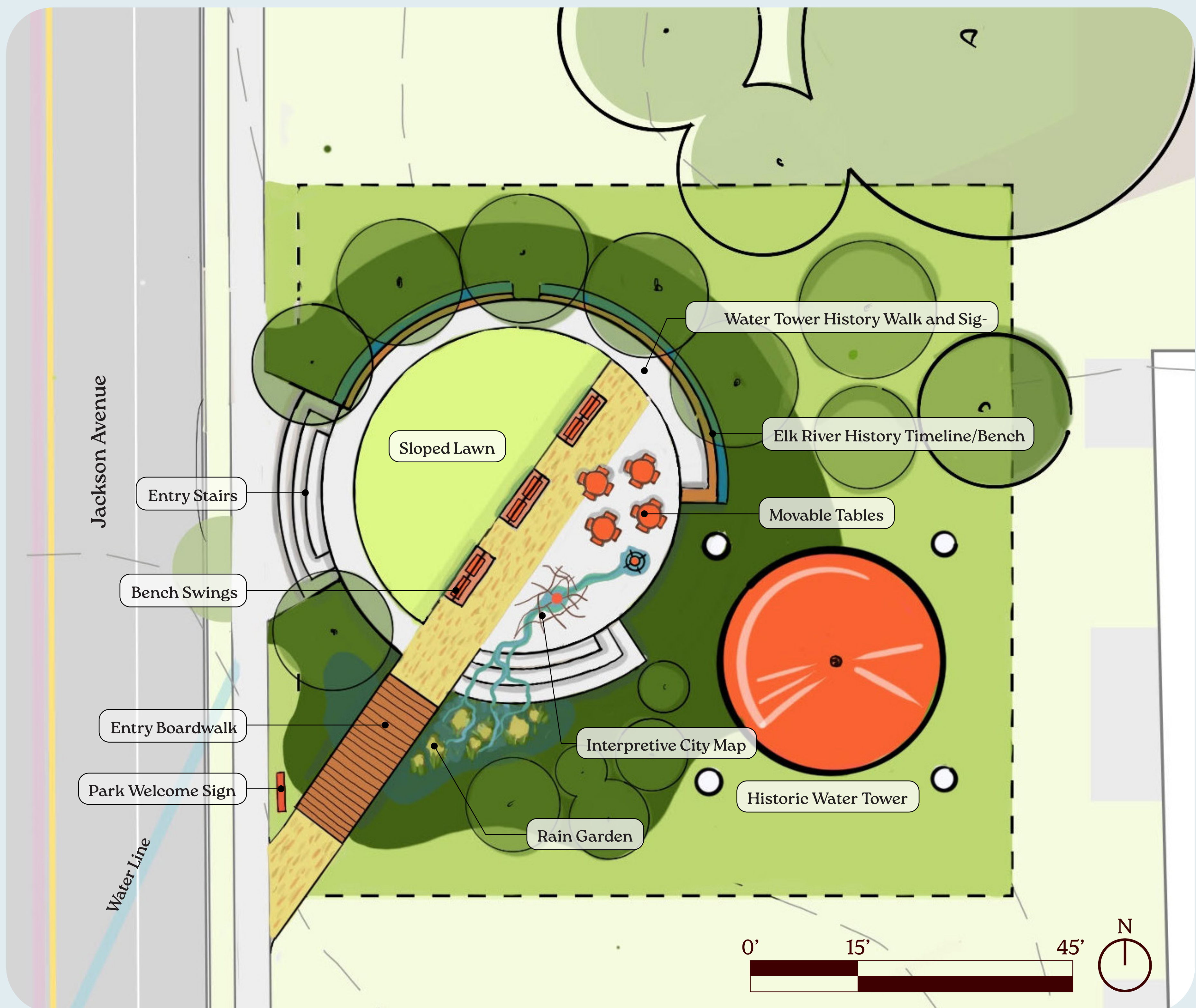
Use a sticky note to share your idea below:



# Elk River Water Tower Historic Site



## Concept Idea 2: Community



**What is missing from this concept?**

Use a sticky note to share your idea below:



# Elk River Water Tower Historic Site

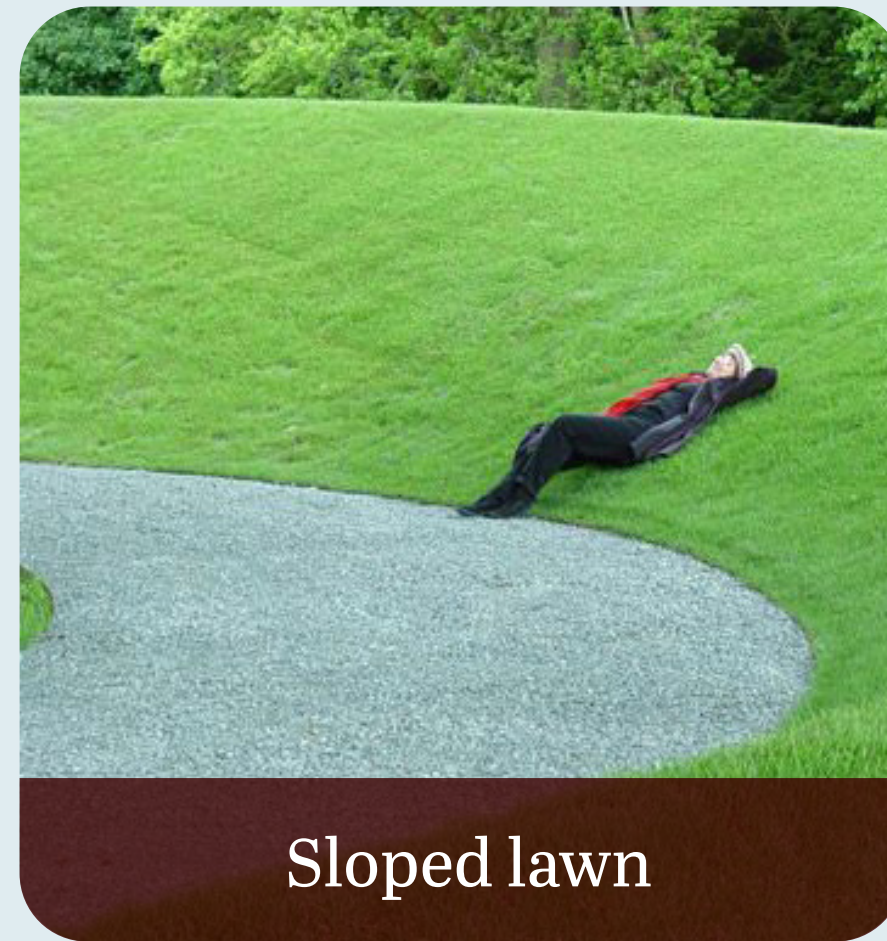


Which programs, materials and plantings do you like the most?  
Place dots on your favorite elements.

## Programs



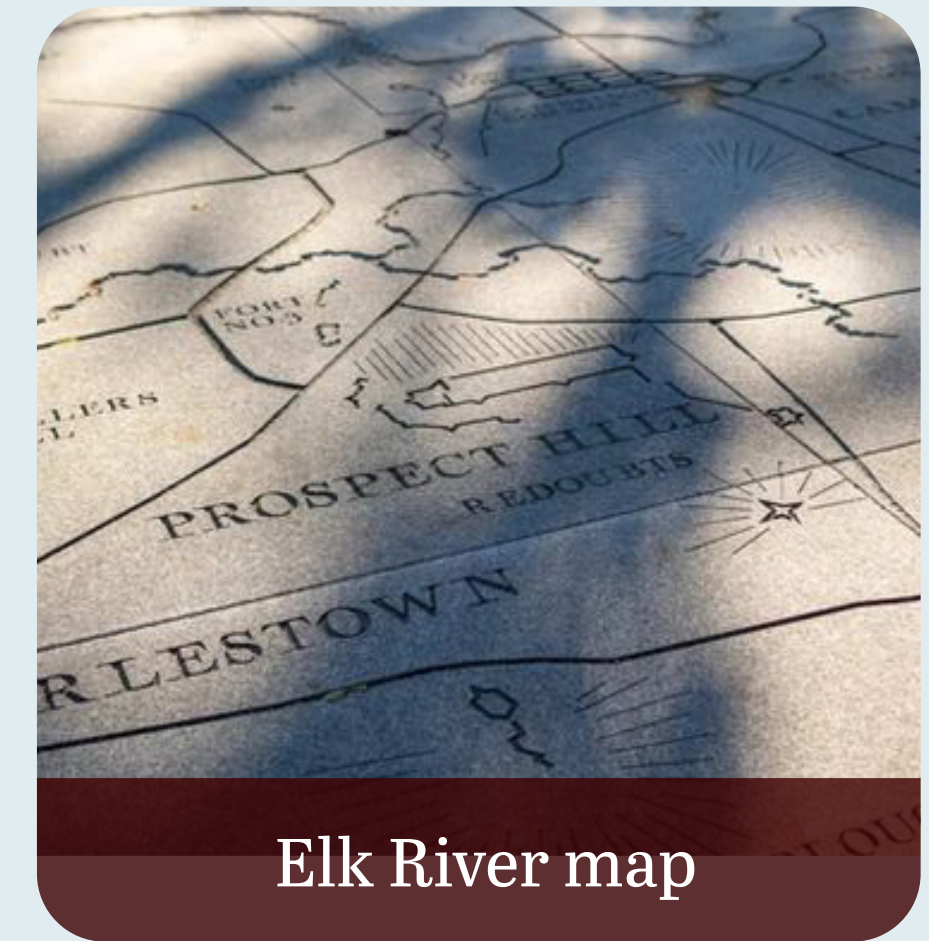
Linear timeline signage



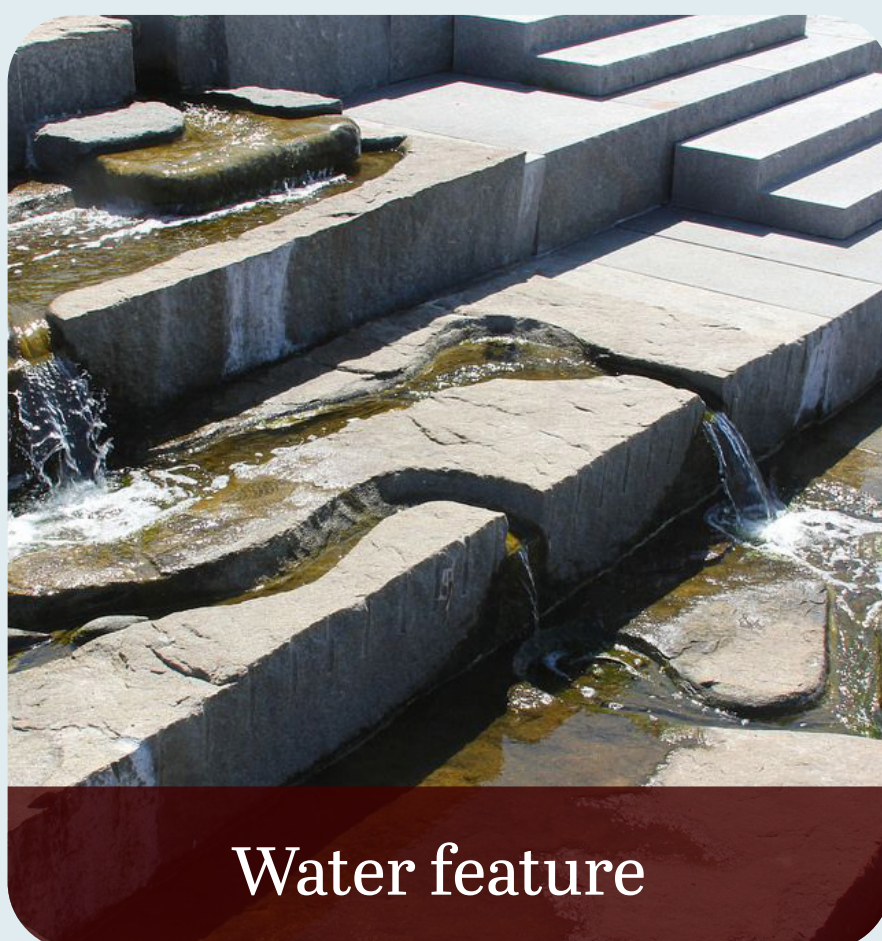
Sloped lawn



Swing benches



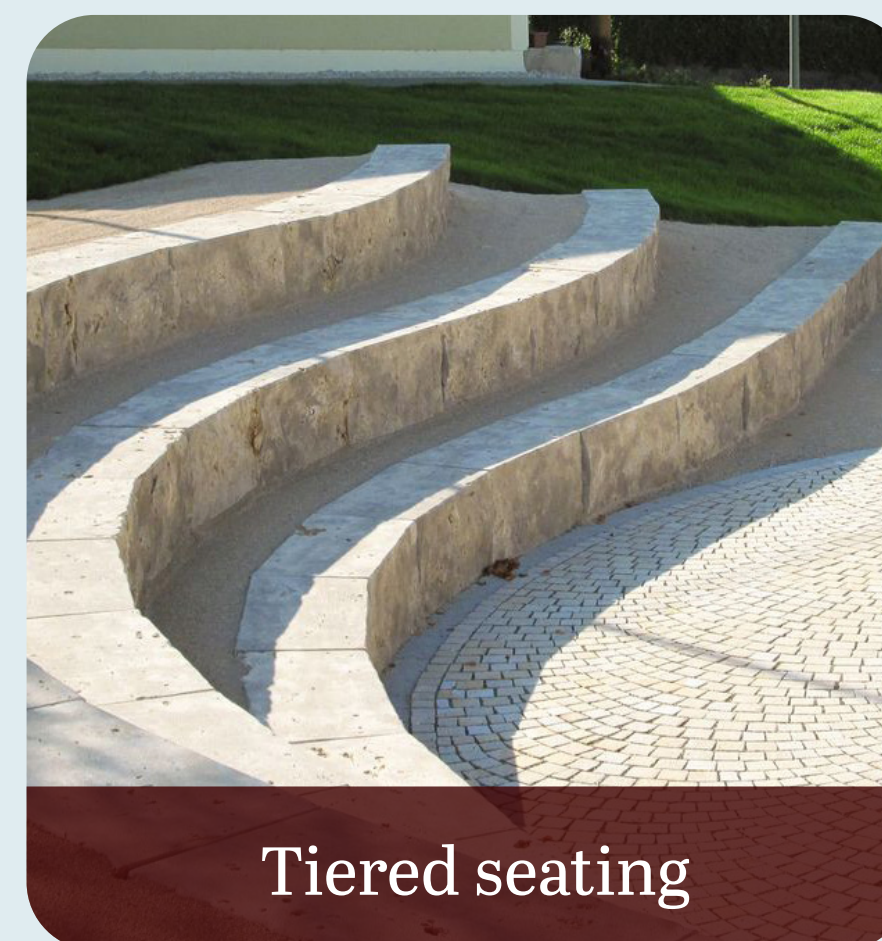
Elk River map



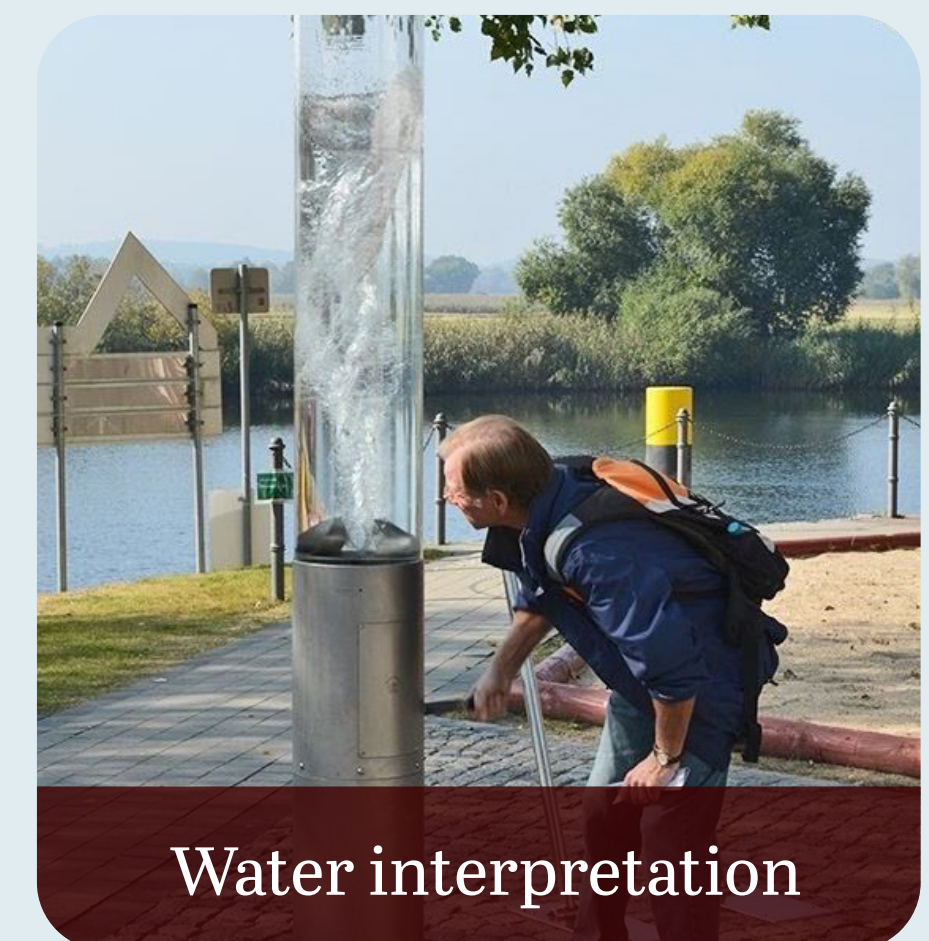
Water feature



Storytelling feature

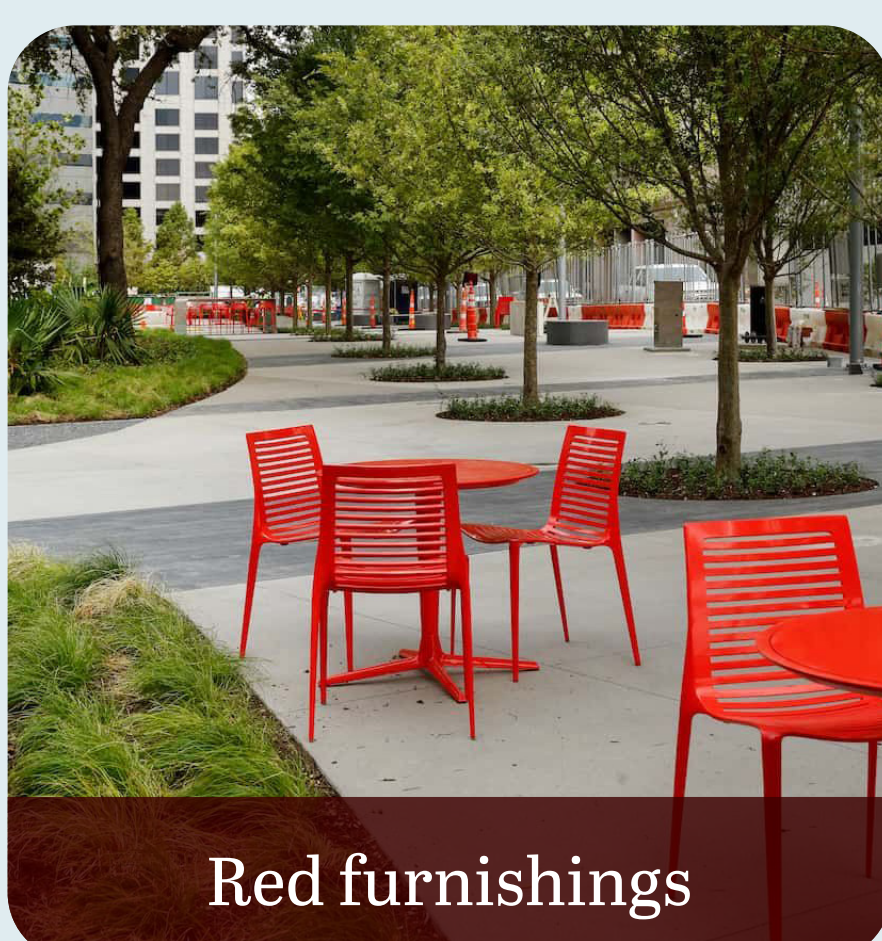


Tiered seating

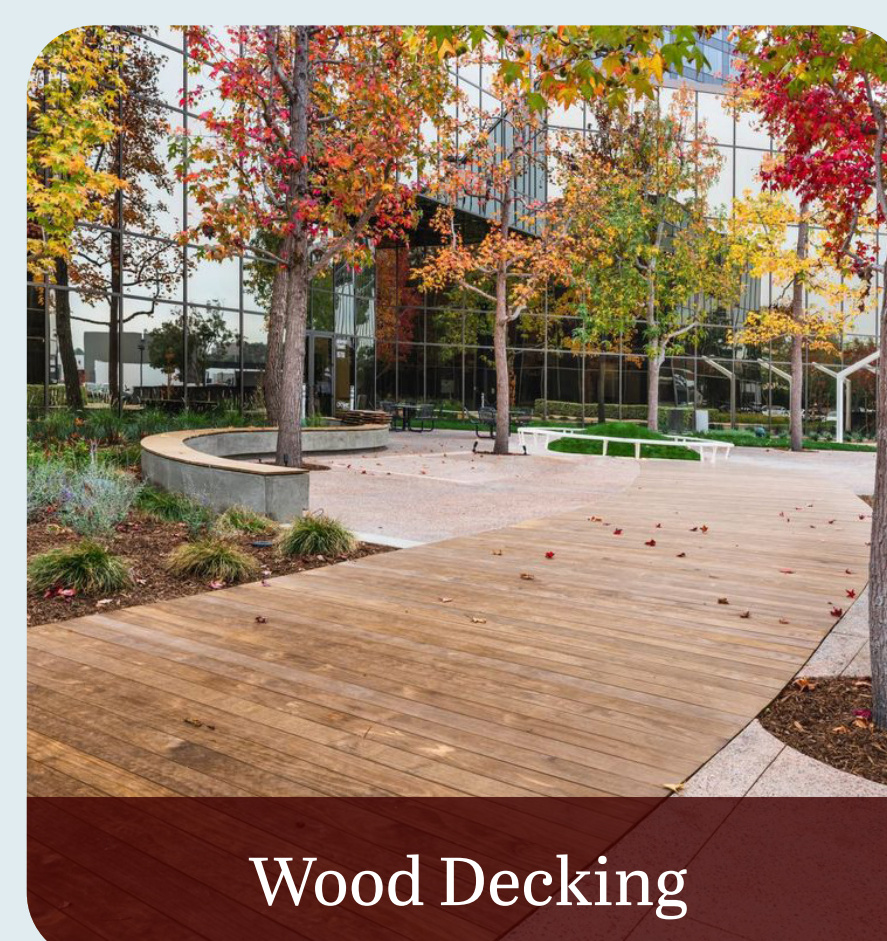


Water interpretation

## Materials



Red furnishings



Wood Decking

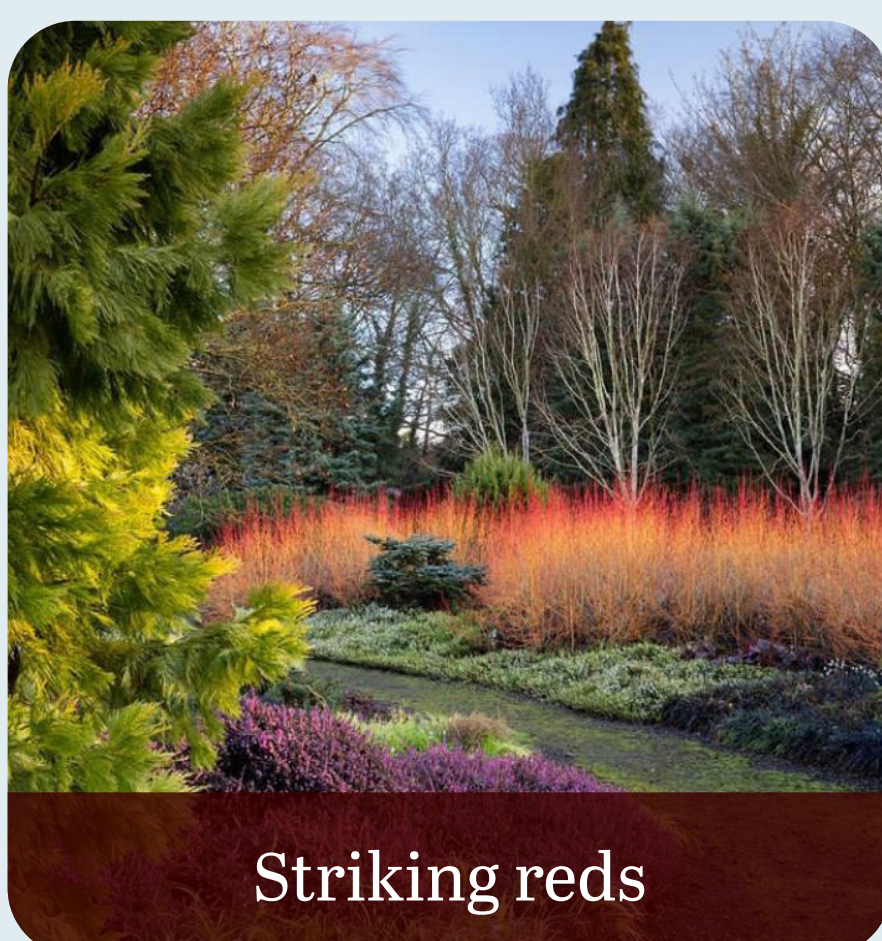


Mixed Textures



Shou Sugi Ban

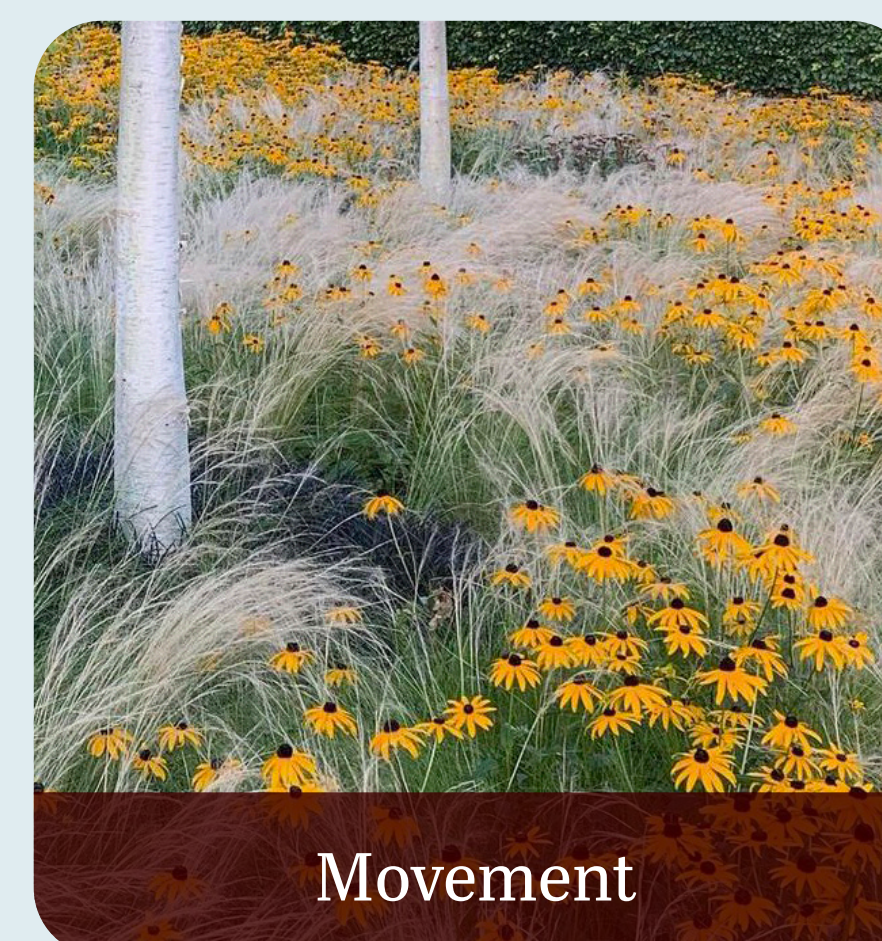
## Plantings



Striking reds



Warm colors



Movement



Year-round interest