



## **MEMORANDUM**

TO: Albertville Mayor and City Council  
Albertville Parks and Recreation Committee

FROM: Michelle Barness / Alan Brixius

DATE: November 21, 2012

RE: Albertville – Central Park Master Plan Summary

FILE: 163.17

## **INTRODUCTION**

Albertville Central Park is a major asset within the community, offering opportunities for open space recreation, and serving as a focal point of community activities and events. With the intention of maintaining and improving this community asset, the City of Albertville has undergone an examination of the park to create an updated Central Park Master Plan. The master plan provides a generalized layout for the park which will function as a guide for appropriate investment in the park in the future. It is not intended as a final design for the park, but rather is a concept based on an analysis of current conditions within the park and the surrounding community, and how those conditions might be improved to the benefit of park users and the community at large.

## **DESIGN PARAMETERS**

Planning staff, in concert with the Albertville Park Committee, have outlined a series of parameters upon which to base the design of the Central Park Master Plan. Those parameters approach potential improvements to the park in a thematic and functional fashion, and essentially divide the master plan into key improvement areas.

**Parameter 1. Albertville Ice Arena.** The Albertville Ice Arena abuts the western edge of Central Park, near the corner of 61<sup>st</sup> Street and Lachman Avenue. Improvements to the ice arena have been included in the Central Park Master Plan in recognition of the fact that the two community-oriented recreational uses are in close proximity, and will unquestionably support and enhance the experience of the other.

Proposed improvements for the interior of the ice arena include a second sheet of ice, an increase in arena seating, improved locker room space, and a new south entrance for the building (as portrayed in the plan). To accommodate the ice arena expansion, 200+ parking stalls are required. A new park entry from the arena parking lot to Central Park will both improve connectivity between the two uses, and provide additional parking and access opportunities for the park from the west.

The area to the south of the ice arena and parking lot will continue to be used for stormwater ponding and treatment.

**Parameter 2. Ongoing Community Events.** Central Park hosts annual community events, including the Albertville Friendly City Days and the Albertville Farmers Market. These community events are concentrated in the northeast corner of the park near 58<sup>th</sup> Street and Main Avenue. This area of Central Park will be designed in a manner that supports the continuation of various community events, creates opportunities for various activities associated with these events, and improves the general appearance and use of the area by the community.

**Parameter 3. Enhanced Main Avenue Corridor.** A priority of the Albertville 2030 Vision Plan is to enhance the aesthetic appeal of Main Avenue. In support of this goal, the City wants to pursue opportunities to enhance the connection between Central Park and Main Avenue, including encouraging improvements along this corridor in the vicinity of the park.

**Parameter 4. Create Attractive and Identifiable Entries to Central Park.** Central Park is currently accessed by several entries around the perimeter of the park. These locations are spread out and provide the community diverse opportunities to enter and enjoy the park. The City would like to encourage continued and improved access and use of the park by focusing on improvements to these entrances.

**Parameter 5. Assess Existing Park Conditions.** A more detailed assessment of current conditions within and surrounding Central Park will allow the City to better plan for future uses and improvements in the park.

**Parameter 6. Consider Opportunities for Park Expansion to the East.** The Central Park Master Plan highlights an area to the east of Central Park that should be examined for potential future use as an addition to, or in connection with, the park.

## **ANALYSIS**

The Albertville Park Committee and City Planning Staff have recommended the Central Park Master Plan (Exhibit B) as a concept for future development of Central Park. The following is an analysis of several key design and planning elements illustrated in the plan, based on the aforementioned design parameters.

**Albertville Ice Arena.** The Central Park Master Plan demonstrates several potential improvements to the ice arena and its surroundings. The ice arena currently hosts a single sheet of ice, which the City Hockey Association and the Ice Arena Board have requested be expanded. The expansion would essentially increase the extent of the current arena building east towards Central Park. It has been determined that a total of 200 off-street parking spaces will be needed to meet the expectant demand for the expanded arena. The parking lot located south of the arena presently contains a total of 176 parking spaces, so a minimum of 24 additional parking stalls will have to be provided. In examining the parking supply issue, three alternative parking options have been developed and considered. Each option was weighed according to its functional and economic advantages and disadvantages.

Option 1 and 2 examine off-site parking. These concepts suggest negotiating a lease arrangement to construct parking on nearby properties to allow for a shared parking lot between the ice arena and existing or future commercial uses. If the off-site options are acceptable with the adjoining property owners, they offer the following project benefits:

- A lease arrangement would avoid high upfront land acquisition costs. The lease payments may be structured with the arena's annual operating budget.
- The selected sites are both zoned B-3, Business District and are currently underutilized. The construction of a paved parking lot can be designed in a manner that will serve both the existing business, future redevelopment, and the expanded shared parking concept. The property owner receives an improved parking lot for their use and the ice arena meets their parking demand in close proximity to the building.
- If the site containing the shared parking redevelops as a new B-3 District use, the established parking lot can be used to satisfy the required parking for the new business.
- These options will not require the relocation of the baseball field in Central Park.

#### Option 1: North Parking Lot

This option would involve the lease of land from L & D Trucking, which is located to the north of the ice arena. A parking lot containing 53 additional parking spaces could be provided in this area, resulting in a total of 229 spaces. This parking provision would exceed the minimum required by the City's Zoning Ordinance and accommodate possible overflow events. A parking lot located between the ice arena and L & D Trucking could meet the parking needs for both properties, in addition to potentially providing parking opportunities for surrounding commercial businesses to the north. A north parking lot also allows patrons of the ice arena to access the site without having to cross any streets.

However, a parking lot located to the north of the ice arena positions visitors far from the south entrance, and requires the addition of a new sidewalk along the west side of the arena. If a lease arrangement with L & D Trucking can be negotiated, the City may

avoid an upfront land purchase cost, but would incur the cost of constructing the parking lot and sidewalk system.

A concept graphic of Option 1 has been attached for further reference (Exhibit C).

#### Option 2: West Parking Lot

This option would involve the leasing of a portion of the Barthel Bus Garage property located to the west of the ice arena across Lachman Avenue. A parking lot containing 32 additional off-street parking spaces could be provided in this area, resulting in a total of 208 spaces, which exceeds the City's Zoning Ordinance parking stall requirements. A parking lot located on the Barthel Bus Garage property could be utilized by both the bus garage and the arena, and would not require an expensive purchase of additional land. The parking lot would be closer to the arena's entrance than Option 1 but would require that visitors cross Lachman Avenue to reach the arena, which may be less than ideal from a pedestrian and vehicular circulation standpoint, and would require the construction of sidewalks and crosswalks. As is the case with Option 1, a successful lease arrangement could eliminate upfront land acquisition costs, but the City would incur costs of constructing the parking lot, sidewalks and crosswalks.

A concept graphic of Option 2 has been attached for further reference (Exhibit C).

#### Option 3: East Parking Lot

This option would involve the construction of a parking lot east of the ice arena within Central Park. A parking lot containing 30 off-street parking stalls could be provided in this area, resulting in a total of 206 spaces, which exceeds the City's Zoning Ordinance parking stall requirements. This parking lot would allow visitors to access the arena without crossing a street, and provides a reduced travel distance between the entrance and the parking lot. The City owns the land upon which the parking lot would be constructed so there is no additional cost of leasing or purchasing land for a lot, and the park would benefit from supplemental parking and a second vehicular access from the west.

However, the parking lot would impact an existing baseball field in the park, which would have to be relocated at considerable expense to the City. A softball field could replace the removed baseball field, however the baseball field is currently maintained by community baseball teams, and there is significant community investment and interest in the field. In addition, removing the baseball field and reorienting a softball field in the same location would require improvements to site fencing to mitigate against a decreased buffer distance between the ballfield and the property edge.

A concept graphic of Option 3 has been attached for further reference (Exhibit D).

Based on an analysis of the three parking options, the City has determined that either Option 1 or Option 2 is most suitable. These two options are illustrated on the Central Park Master Plan. The final decision to pursue one of these options may depend on whether L & D Trucking or the Barthel Bus Garage is willing to enter into a lease agreement with the City. Parking Option 3 was not preferred due to the perceived

economic and social cost of removing the existing baseball field in Central Park to make room for expanded parking from the arena.

**Improvements to Central Park's East End.** The east portion of Central Park serves as an essential interface with the greater Albertville community. Central Park Master Plan design recommendations for this area make an effort to: 1) provide opportunities for community events and activities; 2) create an appealing gateway to the park; 3) improve connections with the adjacent Main Avenue corridor, 4) improve parking and circulation to and within the park; and 5) improve the transition between Central Park and the Burlington Northern Railroad immediately to the north. The "East End Park Perspective" (Exhibit E) provides an idea of how these design elements come together.

### 1) Community Events and Features

As described earlier, Central Park hosts several annual and ongoing events, including Albertville Friendly City Days and the Albertville Farmers Market. The master plan illustrates changes meant to cater to the needs of these events. Some unprogrammed open space has been maintained in this area of the park, which will allow Friendly City Days to continue to erect its festival midway and fair rides and the Albertville Farmers Market to accommodate market vendors in a comfortable fashion. This open space will also function as an area for entertainment events associated with the festival and market.

A key feature proposed for the east portion of Central Park is a railroad depot building and caboose, to be located along the north fence line and beyond the northeast portion of the park designated for Friendly City Days and the Farmers Market. The depot and caboose act as an historical component within the park, mimicking the design of earlier train depots and engines, and creating a thematic and relevant connection with the still active Northern Burlington Railroad the park abuts. A stage will be constructed in connection with the depot which will provide space for community performances, further activating the area. The Albertville Lions Club has offered their services in implementing the depot and caboose feature.

### 2) Main Avenue Gateway Entrance

The "Main Avenue Entry" graphic (Exhibit F) illustrates the diverse improvements intended for the gateway entrance at the northeast corner of the park, at the corner of the Burlington Northern Railroad and Main Avenue. Increased landscaping in the form of trees and garden beds are proposed, which will serve to beautify the area around the entrance, reduce impervious surface, and announce the entry of the park in a much more distinct and memorable way.

Currently chain link fencing borders the park, which serves to define the park but does little to visually soften the entrance of the park or provide a comfortable pedestrian environment. Improvements to the Main Avenue entry should include removing a portion of the chain link fence in this area as far back as the depot building to the northwest, and replacing it with decorative wrought iron fencing. Wrought iron fencing in this location will provide some continued barrier between the park and the railroad, while also creating a more formal edge. Wrought iron fencing should also be placed

along the edges of the Main Avenue entrance and at the corner of 58<sup>th</sup> Street and Main Avenue to emphasize and ground the border of the park in these areas. Vining plants (e.g. wild grape, Virginia Creeper, Boston Ivy, etc.) encouraged to grow on the remaining chain link fence along the north border of park will improve screening between the two uses, create visual interest, and provide natural value.

### 3) Burlington Northern Railroad

The east corner of the park is designed to improve the transition between the railroad and the park. As described earlier, one method for doing so is to employ natural vegetation in combination with fencing to improve screening between the two. Additionally, changes to the ground surface where the park meets the railroad right-of-way may improve the perception of the Main Avenue entry and further define the entrance to the park.

The railroad right-of-way, beyond the railroad tracks, consists of a gravel surface which is aesthetically unappealing when considering the proposed park improvements. In addressing this issue, we must recognize the railroad use and operations in this area and recommend a potential solution that does not interfere with the railroad operations. Our recommendation would be to change the ground surface in this area of the railroad right-of-way from gravel to crushed slate, similar to the slate that underlies the railroad tracks. This change in ground cover is durable, cleaner than gravel, will not interfere with railroad operations, and is consistent with the railroad theme of the Central Park's depot and caboose.

### 4) Main Avenue Corridor

Improvements to the streetscape along Main Avenue in the vicinity of the park will improve the pedestrian environment, and encourage traffic between park activities and the rest of the community. Additionally, design continuity should be encouraged along Main Street and into the park to positively impact both park use and community image by creating a sense of identity and destination for the area. Signage, lighting, vegetated stormwater treatment basins, and public art or decorations along Main Avenue are all potential strategies to be considered for enhancing the park and Main Avenue corridor.

### 5) Parking and Circulation

The master plan recommends maintaining existing 90 degree parking in the center of the park. An additional area of angled parking is also illustrated on the park master plan, along 58<sup>th</sup> Street off of Main Avenue. This angled parking will provide quick access to events held in the east end of the park, as well as provide shared parking for the dance school south of 58<sup>th</sup> Street and other businesses along Main Avenue.

### 6) Trails

Trails through this portion of the park connect to greater circuit trails throughout the park and provide a pathway through the area which maintains desired open space for community events.

**Play Equipment and Splash Pad Options.** The Central Park Master Plan calls for updates to the existing playground located in the southeast corner of the park. The playground is pleasantly located, surrounded by large canopy trees, and easily accessed from the north parking lot and Lander Street. However, the playground equipment is old and should be replaced with new and improved play opportunities.

The park master plan also identifies two potential locations for a splash pad. A splash pad employs a fountain to create an area for water play for families, and is not actually a standing pool of water. The design of a splash pad can also provide an aesthetic feature for a park. One potential splash pad location is over an existing volley ball court in the southeast end of the park near the playground. The proximity to the playground would benefit families that would like to move between the splash pad and playground. Another potential splash pad location is directly south of the north parking lot, nearer the Main Avenue entrance. This splash pad could be carefully designed to provide an aesthetic entrance element for the park.

**Sledding Hill.** The location for a potential sledding hill has been identified on the Central Park Master Plan, on the west side of the park and south of the ice arena. There is currently no hill in this location so fill would need to be brought into the park to create the slope necessary. The hill would provide safe sledding opportunities within the boundary of the park.

**Circuit Trail System.** The master plan illustrates a circuitous trail system throughout the park. A combination of sidewalks and trails provide recreational opportunities for visitors, as well as providing needed circulation routes to different areas of the park. A key element of the proposed trail system is a boardwalk from the southwest park entry off of 57<sup>th</sup> Street. The boardwalk brings visitors through a natural area and wetland, an important protected feature within the park.

An area of the trail system along the south boundary of the park may require an easement or right-of-passage agreement with the Church of St. Albert property to the south. Currently, park fencing in this area curves north past the west edge of the playground area, and church fencing extends along its entire north boundary. The master plan proposes extending the trail system around the south edge of the east softball field, in which case it would be necessary to adjust the location of fencing along the church property.

**Park Entrances.** The Central Park Master Plan identifies locations along the perimeter of the park for improved entries. The identified entrances to the park are located at the parking lot for the ice arena to the west, from the Albertville Fire Station parking lot to the south, directly off of 57<sup>th</sup> Avenue to the south, at the corner of Main Avenue and the Burlington Northern Railroad to the east, and at the parking lot entrance off of 58<sup>th</sup> Street.

All of these entrances to Central Park should be maintained and considered for improvements that make the entrances more visible and attractive (e.g. increased signage, lighting, landscaping, street or trail access, etc.). In addition, the corner of

Main Street and the Burlington Northern Railroad right-of-way at the northeast corner of the park should be designed as a gateway entrance to the park.

**Property Line Issue.** The Central Park Master Plan calls out an area in the north end of the park where a park hockey rink overlaps the property line of 5888 Lamont Avenue. The City should investigate a land exchange with the property owners to rectify the conflict.

**Future Use of Adjacent Properties.** Currently several residential properties border Central Park's east end, between Main and Lander Avenues. The City of Albertville Proposed Land Use Plan guides this location for commercial development in the future. This area has been called out on the park master plan as the City may wish to consider how the timing for a transition to commercial development might coincide with park development. Alternatively, the City may consider whether or not the land might be integrated into Central Park, or otherwise contribute to park uses. There is no specific recommendation for the area at this time, but the City may want to reevaluate it in the future.

## **SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Central Park Master Plan outlines desired images and improvements intended to make this park a focal point of the community and to enhance the park users' experience. In implementing the Central Park Master Plan and addressing the noted issues, the following recommendations are offered:

1. The City has identified the expansion of the ice arena in Albertville as a goal within its 2012 Visioning Study. The ice arena expansion requires the cooperation of Albertville, St. Michael, the School District, and Hockey Association. While the building expansion may not be immediate, the City should have discussions with the neighboring property owners to determine if a shared parking arrangement and property lease may be acceptable to them. If the lease arrangement is not a workable option, the City may have to consider Ice Arena Park Option #3 or explore other alternatives to off-site parking options.
2. The master plan has identified park entrance points and provides trail connections in the following areas:
  - a. Create a significant park entrance that contributes to an enhanced Main Avenue streetscape. This entrance design must address the park design and sidewalk and streetscape appeal along Main Avenue.
  - b. Improve 58<sup>th</sup> Street with an urban street design, curb and gutter, and diagonal on-street parking as a means of defining the automobile entrance to the park.



- c. Create an entrance to the parking lot at the corner of 58<sup>th</sup> Street and Landers Avenue.
  - d. Provide a trail connection from the Fire Station's east parking lot as a means of providing park access from the south.
  - e. Examine the opportunity to provide a park entrance from 57<sup>th</sup> Street west of the fire station. This entrance and trail would require the construction of a boardwalk through the wetlands in this area.
  - f. A west Central Park entrance will be established at the ice arena parking lot. This western entrance will be connected to the balance of the park through a system of trails. The ice arena parking lot will then be available to park users.
3. The park entrances will be connected by a system of internal trails. These trails will be designed in circuits that will serve both a circulation and recreational purpose. The actual trail locations shall be established in a manner that does not interfere with park facilities or events. A trail connection along the south end of the east softball field is desired to provide trail connections to the playground area. To accommodate this desired trail connection, an easement and fence relocation will need to be negotiated with the Church of St. Albert.
  4. The proposed park improvements will occur in phases as funds are available and the improvements become prioritized. In this respect, the City will undertake the following strategies for implementation:
    - a. Encourage and accept donations for park improvements that are consistent with the Central Park Master Plan from civic organizations, sports organizations, or private citizen groups.
    - b. Identify and prioritize park improvements to include them in the City's annual park capital improvement plan and budget process.
    - c. Annually inventory and assess the condition of the existing playground equipment to determine the need for the replacement or upgrade of equipment.
    - d. Prepare a grading plan for the sliding hill and accept free fill deposits, if available, from other development projects.

## **NORTH COMMUNITY PLAYFIELDS**

As part of the Central Park Master Plan study, the City also requested a concept plan for a City-owned site located immediately north of the Albertville Wastewater Treatment Plant. Exhibit G illustrates the North Community Playfields concept. In discussion with the City Council, there is a degree of uncertainty as to how the City may wish to utilize this property in the future. The City may pursue a community playfield, need portions of the land for an expanded Wastewater Facility, or consider sale of the land for future development.

### **Design Parameters.**

Wastewater Treatment Facility. The total Wastewater Treatment site is 12.9 acres. The Wastewater Treatment Facility, its retention ponds, and public works occupies the south half of the site, leaving approximately six acres of land undeveloped.

The City Wastewater Treatment Facility operates under a Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) permit. The City has received notification from MPCA that there is a need to upgrade the City's Wastewater Treatment Facility to reduce phosphorous loads being released into Hunter Lake. Additionally, there has been discussions pertaining to the decommissioning of Albertville holding ponds. The City will need to investigate wastewater plant designs in the next ten years to satisfy MPCA operation mandates. This utility plan may change the size and configuration of the site available for the community park.

Overhead Utility Lines. Xcel owns a 100 foot wide overhead utility easement that bisects the undeveloped portion of the Wastewater Treatment Facility site. This easement contains overhead electrical transmission lines. This easement is a physical obstacle that will influence park design. No permanent structures may be constructed within the easement that may interfere with the use or maintenance of the utility.

Shoreland Area. The subject site falls within the shoreline overlay zone of Hunter Lake. The shoreland regulations establish regulations for building setbacks, grading, filling, and vegetative removal. These regulations influence the park layout and design.

Albertville 2011 Trails Plan. The City's 2011 Trails Plan outlines trail recommendations throughout the City. This plan calls for a separated off-street trail along MacIver Avenue to accommodate bicycle and pedestrian movements between the Cities of Albertville and Otsego. Additionally, the 2011 Trails Plan recommends an overland trail that follows the Hunter Lake shoreland and connects the Hunter Pass neighborhood with the Towne Lakes neighborhood, creating an attractive walkable circuit.

Compost Site. Currently, the subject site is used as a community compost site. This is a valued and successful amenity used by Albertville and Otsego residents. The City Council suggested that any park concept attempt to reserve a portion of the site for continued composting.

**Analysis.** The North Community Playfields is intended to provide multiple fields for league play and even tournaments. In this regard, the concept plan has considered field sizes, different types of sports fields, location, orientation, access, parking, and concessions. The concept plan had to address the City's design parameters and consider the land use compatibility issues with residential neighborhoods to the west, north and east.

In responding to the recreational needs of the City and the design parameters, the concept plan includes the following features:

#### 1) Design Flexibility

In discussions with the Parks and Recreation Committee, City Council, and FYCC, there was not a definite direction given as what sports this community playfield will accommodate (soccer, softball, lacrosse, baseball, football). To address this uncertainty, the plan illustrates a variety of sport field layouts. The final decision of the types of sports that will be included in the North Community Playfields will be made when the City moves toward construction.

#### 2) Baseball Facility

The concept plan illustrates a full baseball field with bleachers and concessions. This baseball field is dimensioned for adult baseball leagues. This concept anticipated the potential need to relocate the existing baseball field from Central Park to accommodate the ice arena expansion. Any new baseball facility must be designed for adult league play, tournaments, and evening games. In this respect, site access, parking, field lighting, and concessions will be considered in the field location, orientation, and design.

#### 3) Access and Parking

North Community Playfields abuts MacIver Avenue, a major collector street. The park access has been aligned with 63<sup>rd</sup> Street in Otsego to provide a full access intersection. A large parking area is located at the entrance to the community playfields. The concept plan shows 95 stalls. Trails would be extended from the parking lot to the various playfields.

#### 4) Trails

The concept plan illustrates an overland trail that runs along the Hunter Lake shoreline and provides an attractive natural walking and biking path around the lake. Other interior trails are intended to provide access to the various playfields and link with other trails to provide walkable circuits within the park.

#### 5) Play Area

While the community playfields are intended primarily for organized sports, the concept plan provides an area for play equipment and structures. This offers a location for young children to play while parents or siblings participate in organized sports. The play area itself could become an area attraction itself depending on the size and complexity of the playground equipment.

## 6) Compost Site

The current compost site is a valued community amenity. In this regard, the City Council requested that the park concept include a location for the compost site to remain on the property. This is a difficult design feature in that large scale composting is not necessarily compatible with function and aesthetics which communities desire in their parks.

In an attempt to address this issue, the concept plan illustrates a compost site comparable in area to the existing facility. This location was selected to segregate it from the balance of the park facilities and to take advantage of the existing driveway access.

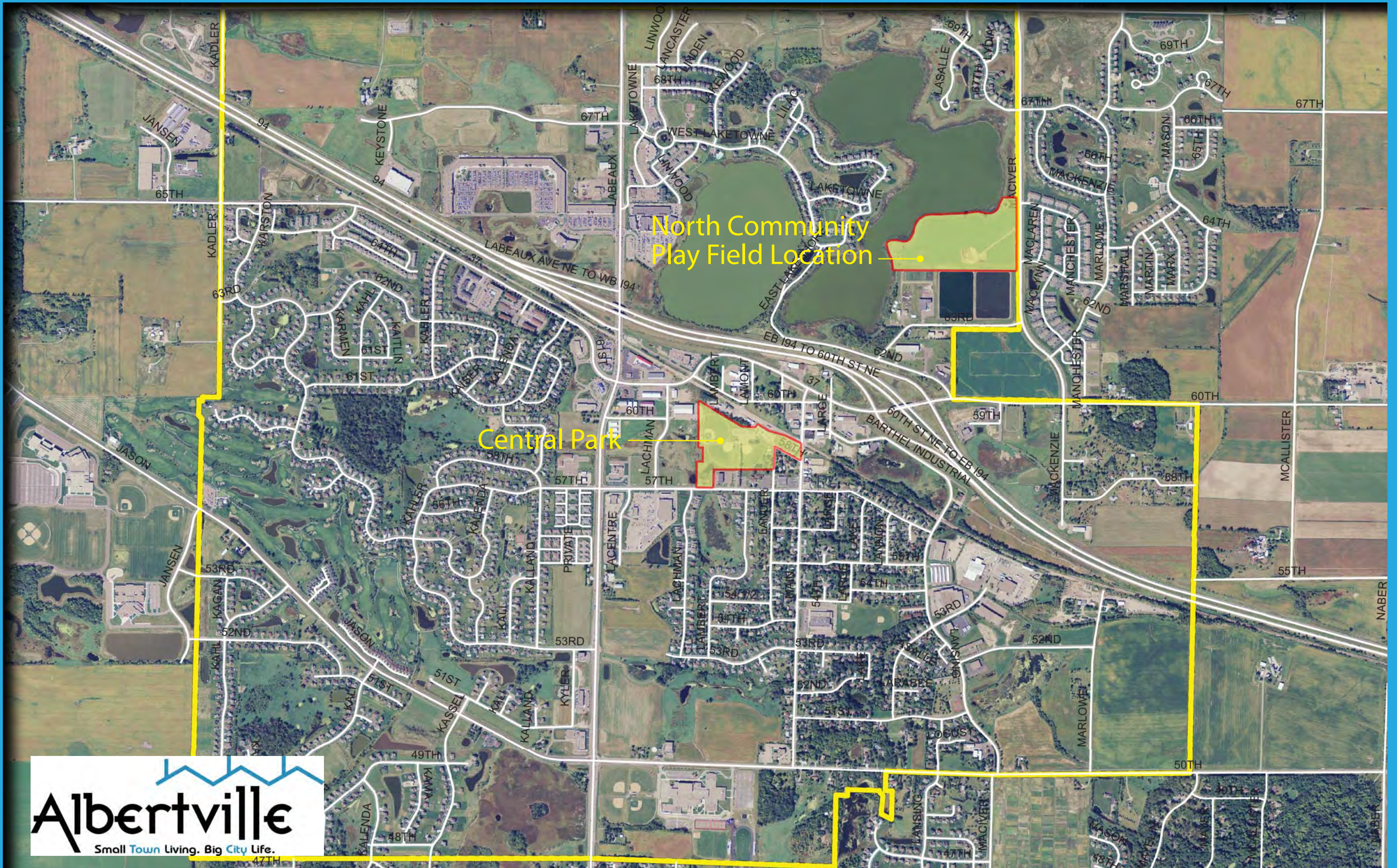
The proposed site's proximity to Maclver Avenue, the lake trail, and Hunter Lake raise concerns over its visibility. If the compost site is relocated, the City would need to provide extensive screening using berms and landscaping to reduce its visual impacts.

An alternative to the compost site location on the concept plan is to investigate this issue with the Wastewater Treatment Plant upgrade. Other locations may prove more appropriate if the holding ponds are decommissioned or if the Wastewater Plant/Public Works site needs to be reconfigured to accommodate a new Wastewater Plant design.

## **CONCLUSION**

The North Community Playfields concept is only intended to provide a spatial analysis of how this site may be used as a park. The city has no immediate plans to construct a community park at this site. Future determinations for this site will depend on the land area needed for the upgrade of the Wastewater Treatment Plant, the future of the City's sewer retention basins, and development of vacant commercial parcels south of this site.

c: Bob Thistle  
Adam Nafstad  
Sue Schwalbe  
Tim Guimont



North Community  
Play Field Location

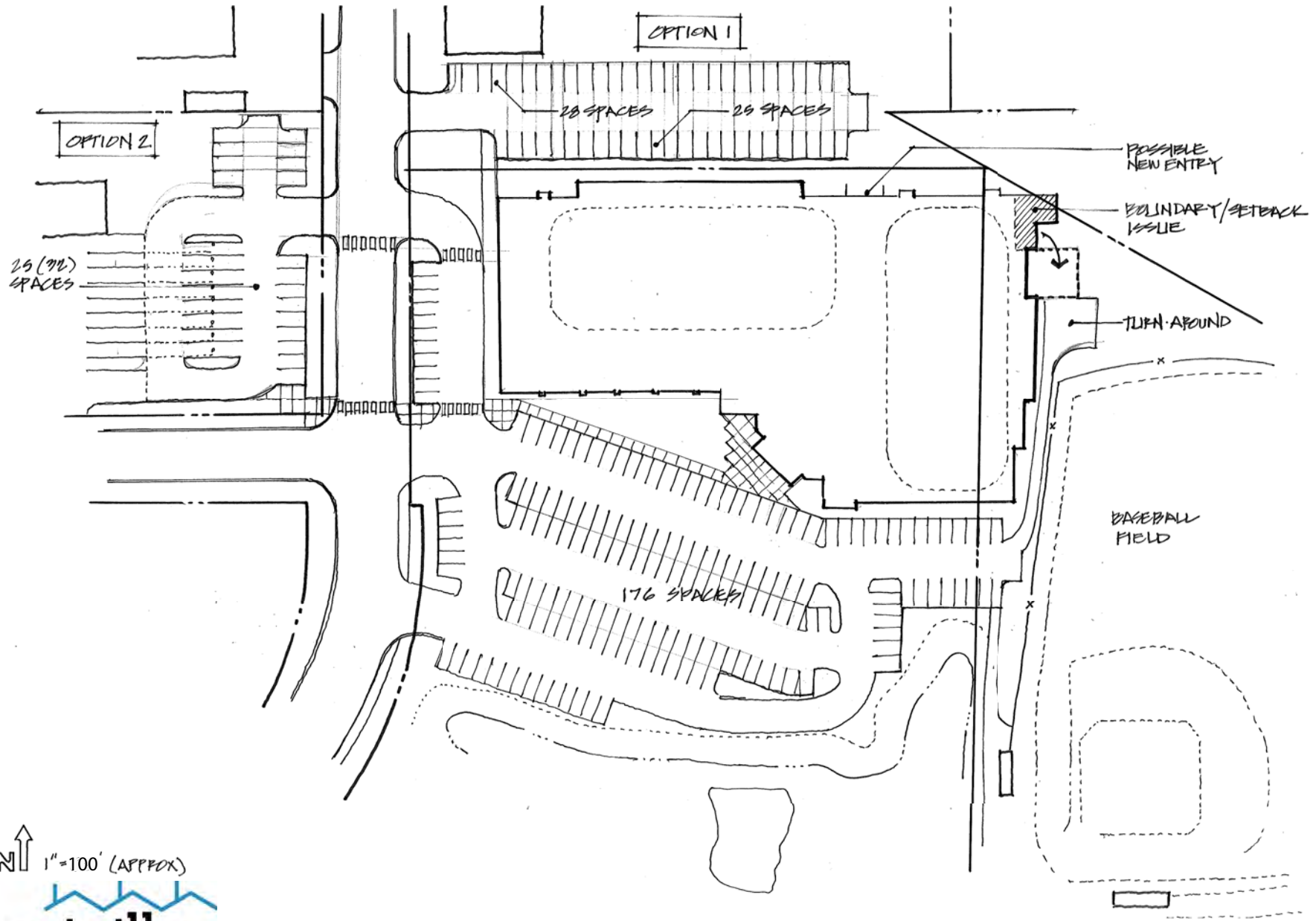
Central Park



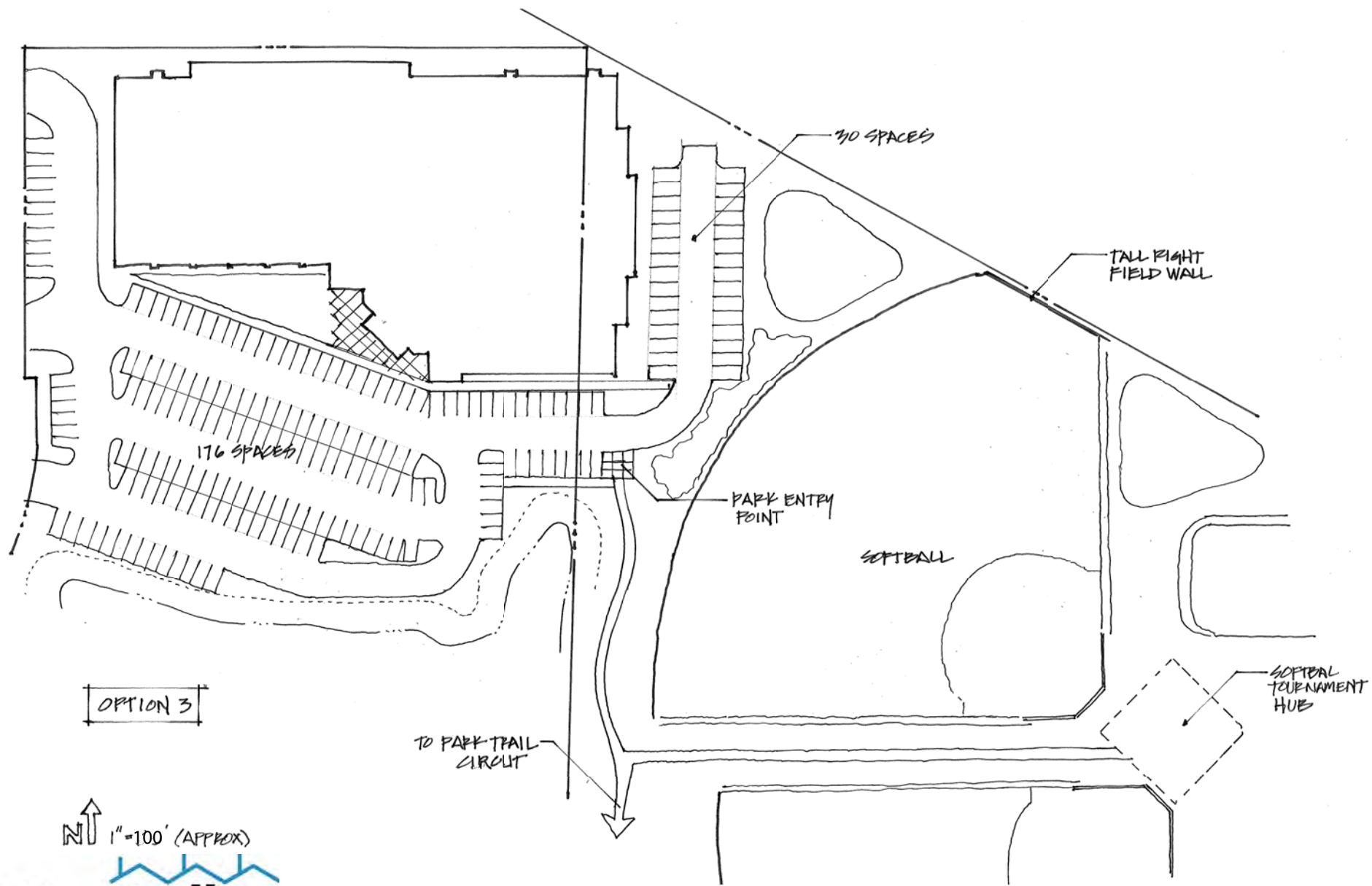
# Central Park Master Plan

## Albertville, Minnesota





N ↑ 1" = 100' (APPROX)



OPTION 3

N ↑ 1" = 100' (APPROX)







East End  
Park Perspective



Main Avenue Entry

# North Community Play Fields Concept

Hunter Lake

