



# SHAWNEE OUTDOOR LEARNING CENTER

WEST LOUISVILLE  
OUTDOOR  
RECREATION INITIATIVE





## CHILDREN IN NATURE – NATURE IN CHILDREN

Children across Louisville are increasingly disconnected from the natural world, and this is especially true for youth in urban neighborhoods.

Children in west Louisville have fewer opportunities to freely and safely experience nature close to home. This relative lack of opportunity adversely affects education, health, and job outcomes.

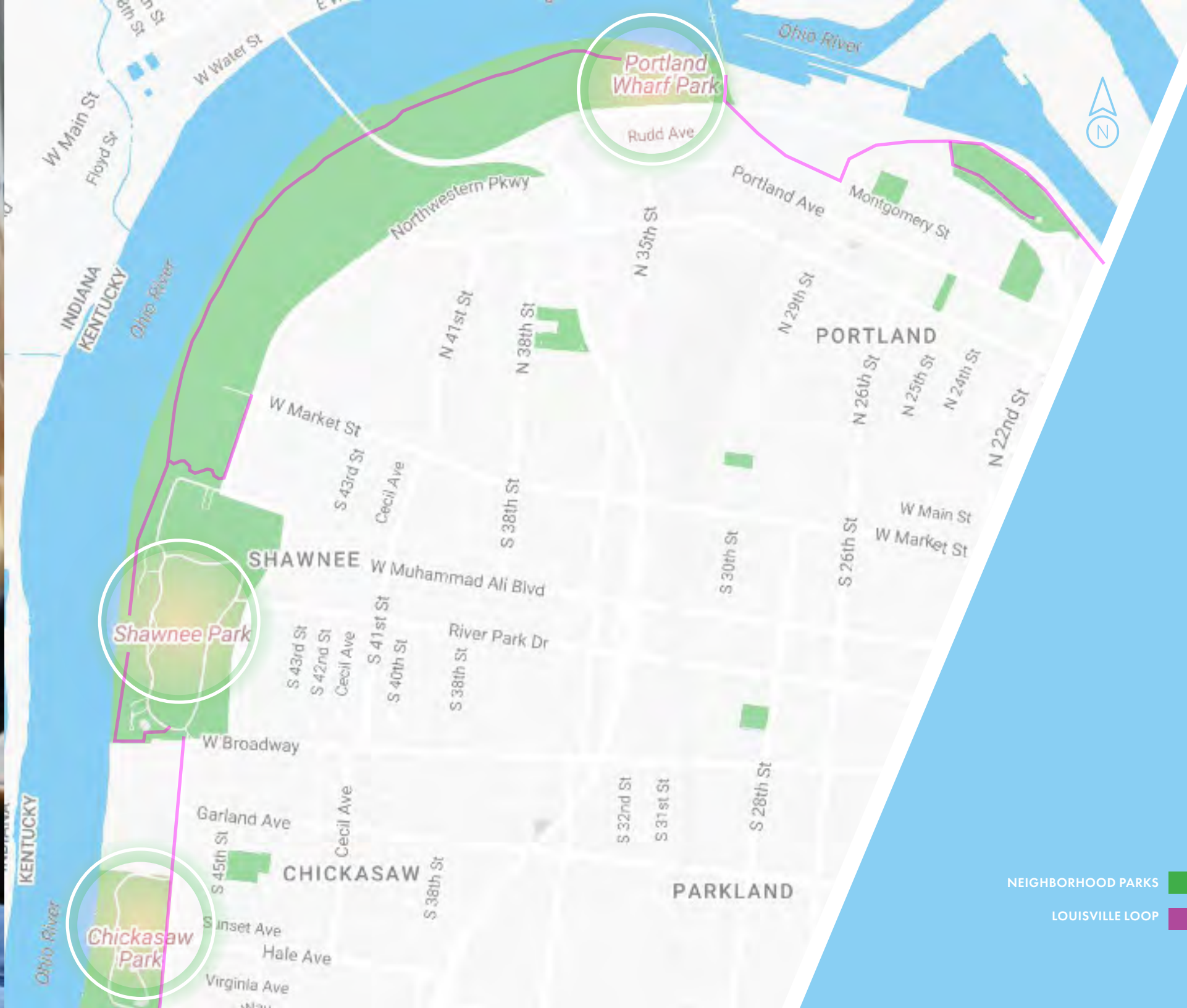
Over the past ten years, Louisville Parks and Recreation has engaged thousands of west Louisville youth and families in nature through school field trips, after-school programming, and community events such as the annual Canoemobile.

**West Louisville residents want more, not less, nature in their lives.**

This includes:

- access to the Ohio River, the most important natural asset in the community;
- safe and local opportunities to fish, hike, bike, boat, canoe, and climb;
- enriching out-of-school opportunities for children that broaden life experiences and support physical and socio-emotional well-being;
- neighborhood-driven programming, partnerships, and leadership opportunities; and
- aspirational world-class facilities to connect residents to the great outdoors.





## INTRODUCING THE WEST LOUISVILLE OUTDOOR RECREATION INITIATIVE

The West Louisville Outdoor Recreation Initiative (WLORI) is Louisville Parks and Recreation's drive to increase equitable access to nature for Louisville children and families. It is focused on expanding programming and related park amenities to better serve west Louisville residents.

As a result of two years of community surveys, community outreach programming, and public meetings, the WLORI master plan was finalized in the fall of 2016.

The initiative is being spearheaded by the Department's Natural Areas Division, based at Jefferson Memorial Forest (JMF). It has its roots in the JMF's Louisville is Engaging Children Outdoors (Louisville ECHO) program initiative that was launched in 2008 with seed funding from the U.S. Forest Service.

Louisville ECHO is the programmatic component of the WLORI. Its expansion, along with development of complementary outdoor recreation amenities, is the heart of Louisville Parks and Recreation's strategy moving forward.

The keystone facility proposed, the Shawnee Outdoor Learning Center (SOL Center), is a regional nature/outdoor education center to provide "nearby nature" access for west Louisville residents. It will serve as the base for expanded outdoor education, recreational programming, and quality of life enhancing stewardship activities across west Louisville.



## SHAWNEE PARK — THE HUB OF OUTDOOR ACTIVITY

Shawnee Park is the natural hub for many of the outdoor recreation amenity improvements proposed as part of the 2016 WLORI master plan.

### Benefits include:

- its proximity and relative ease of access to the Ohio River;
- the availability of natural spaces near the river, including those associated with the old Fontaine Ferry Park;
- its convenient access to public transportation and the Louisville Loop; and
- proximity to nearby neighborhoods and existing activity areas within the park.

The 2016 master plan focused on creating complementary activity areas that open natural spaces within the park for use and enjoyment by the public. This includes access to the Ohio River for fishing and boating and access to woodlands for hiking and biking, as well as observation of nature and nature play.



“The West Louisville Outdoor Recreation Initiative envisions a future where all Louisville’s children and their families can connect with nature and the outdoors. This initiative reflects all three of my administration’s main goals: that we become a community of lifelong learning, we’re a healthier city, and an even more compassionate city.”

Louisville Mayor  
Greg Fischer



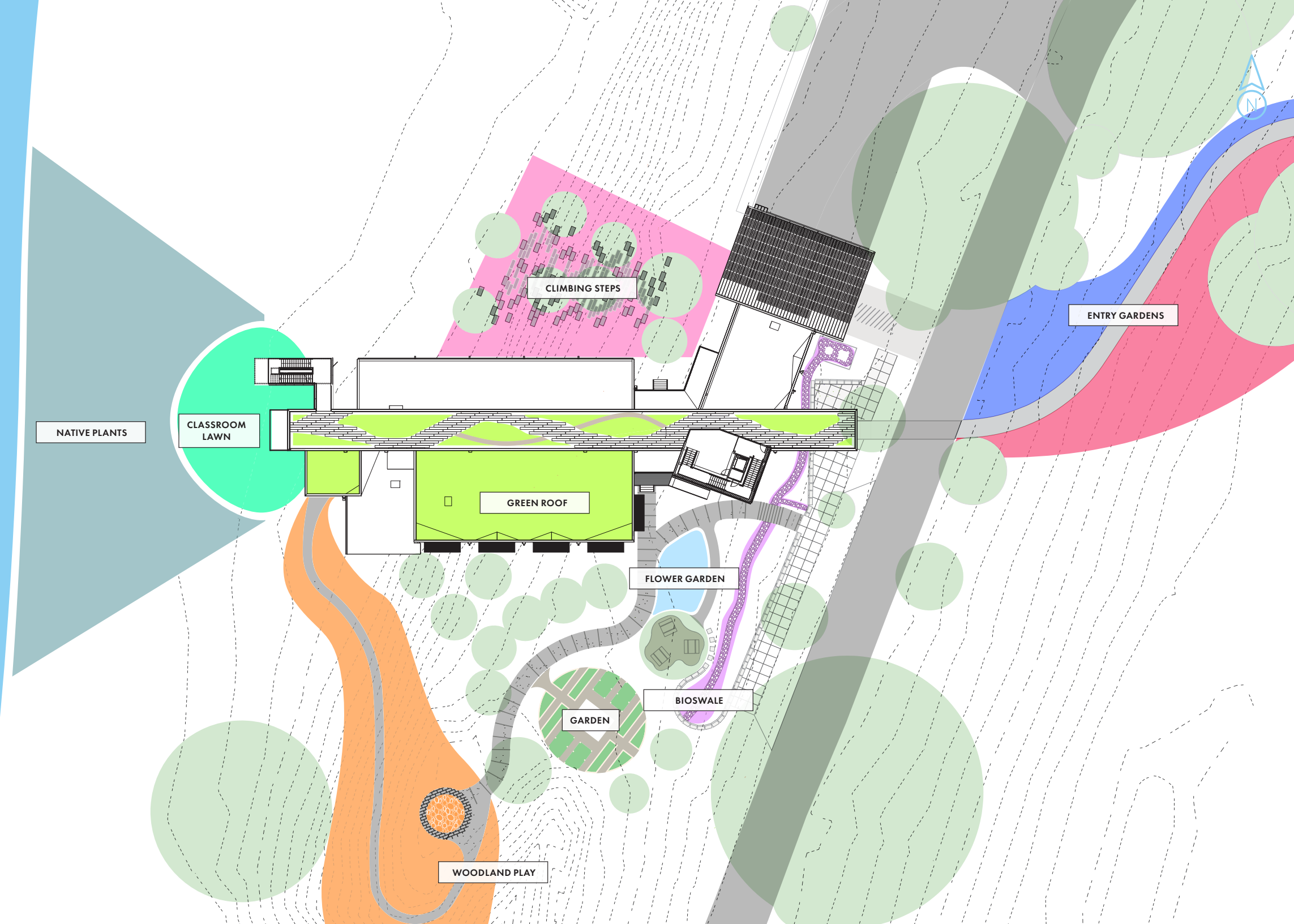
# SITE SELECTION

The Shawnee Outdoor Learning Center will provide west Louisville residents with best of class facilities for place-based exploration of nature. The facility brings to life a general recommendation of the 1994 Master Plan for Olmsted Parks and Parkways to engage in program planning that encourages neighborhood and community-wide use of Shawnee Park.

The SOL Center site was selected by a steering committee composed of west Louisville residents and elected officials as well as Louisville Parks and Recreation and Olmsted Parks Conservancy staff. The committee met over the course of several months to narrow the final site from a list of multiple candidates within Shawnee Park before selecting an ideal site.

Strategically located in the northwestern corner of the park, the site selected complements the Olmsted plan by utilizing existing parking and taking advantage of activity areas such as the Louisville Loop trailhead and the new boat/canoe access ramp and bicycle pump track.

The building itself is designed and oriented so that it blends into the landscape, minimizing the face it presents to formal areas of the park. Park users reach the building and grounds via a sinewy landscaped path, and are enticed to face nature through the building, via the gardens, and along the path that extends to the river below.



*"The West Louisville Outdoor Recreation Initiative and associated Louisville ECHO programming is a great example of how Metro Agencies, such as Parks and the Center for Health Equity, are working together with community partners to address social determinants of health. It is important that we recognize and understand that health equity is everybody's work. The fates of all in our community are intertwined, and the power of united action is making a difference in the lives of every citizen. The ECHO program affords us the opportunity to leverage our greatest asset, "people", to engage in transformative action that allows us the ability to produce better health outcomes.*"

Vincent E. James, Sr.  
Chief of Community Building  
Office of the Mayor





AERIAL VIEW OF SHAWNEE OUTDOOR LEARNING CENTER SITE

## THE REVEAL

Situated outside the wall necessitated by the Great Flood of 1937, the Shawnee Outdoor Learning Center dares to reclaim access to the Ohio River. The young and young at heart, those seeking solitude, families bonding together, and individuals of all abilities will be able to access a cantilevered rooftop garden with tree-canopy views of the river as it continues its timeless march to the sea. From this perch, nearer still to bald eagles and great blue herons, one can connect with the mighty Ohio and the wilderness stretching along its banks, long-hidden in plain sight.

Beyond fulfilling the most basic need to connect individuals to nature on a personal level, the Shawnee Outdoor Learning Center will support community needs by creating community opportunities.

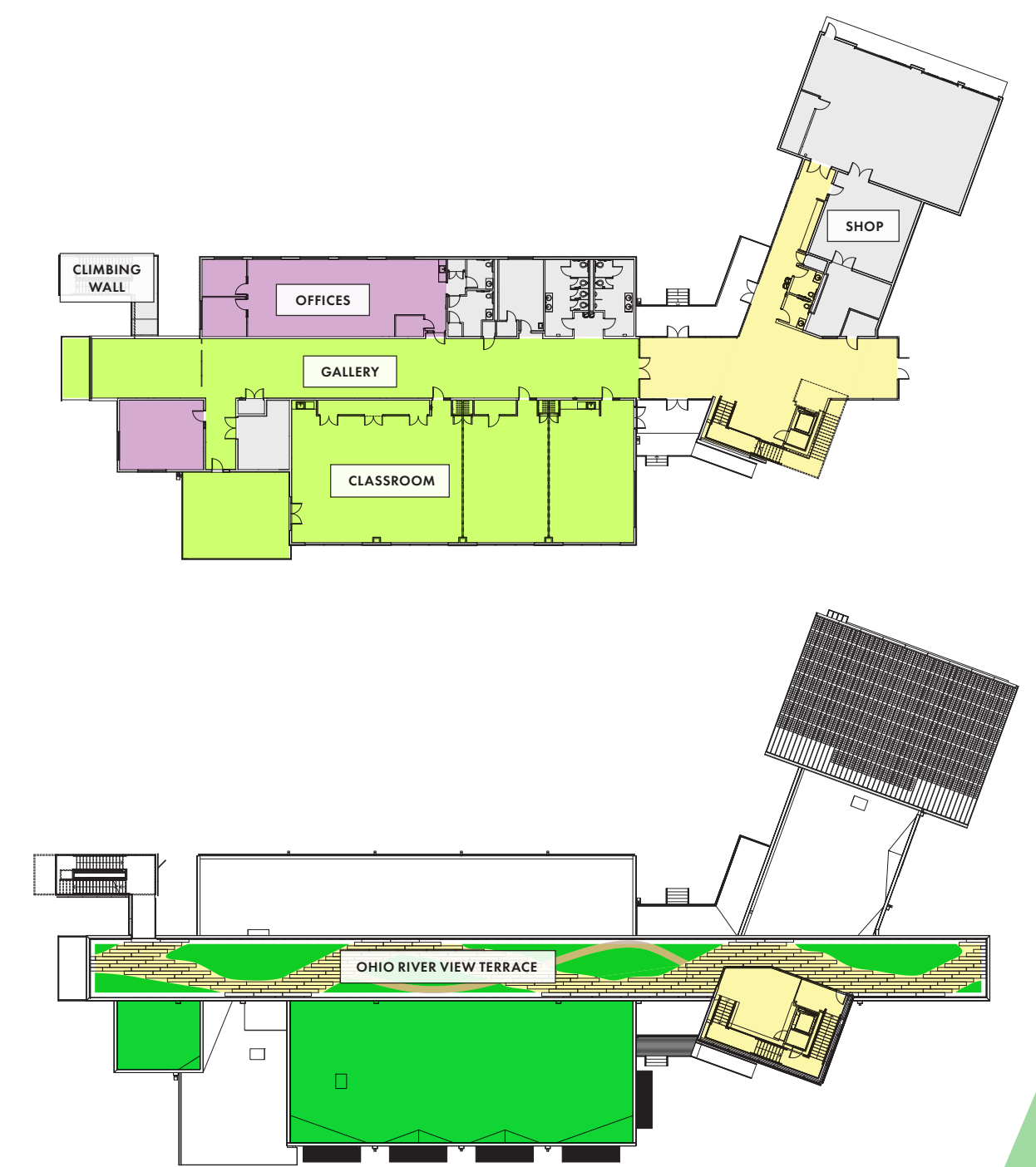
We invite you to imagine the positive outcomes...

- routine public programs such as canoeing and climbing that provide youth new experiences and allow them to challenge themselves;
- a catalyst for existing and new grass-roots organizations in west Louisville that may utilize the center and associated amenities to provide local youth with inspiring after-school opportunities;
- an immediate increase in convenient opportunities for local school children to experience the awe of nature where they reside;
- expansion of Metro Parks and partner-led stewardship opportunities that extend beyond the center to reclaim natural spaces within local parks for use by neighborhood residents;
- enriching and fulfilling employment opportunities for neighborhood youth with an urge to teach, create, or give back;
- an avenue by which to inspire the next great landscape architect, photographer, mountain climber, environmental engineer, or writer who found their calling through a childhood spent exploring the banks of the Ohio River or walking new nature paths within Shawnee Park; and
- greatly enhanced opportunities for those with time to share their love and passion for the outdoors with the next generation of outdoor enthusiasts.





PUBLIC ACCESS – ENTRY FOYER & GALLERY WALK



*“ I care about creating opportunities for those who are left out. The West Louisville Outdoor Recreation Initiative and Louisville ECHO are creating those opportunities. By building a community resource (Shawnee Outdoor Learning Center) and putting on programs (Louisville ECHO), our community will be getting exposed to a world many have never thought about entering. ”*

JoCari Beattie  
Community Outreach Specialist  
Louisville Parks and Recreation  
Natural Areas Division





“ Louisville ECHO teaches our students using hands-on engaging experiences and education outdoors in their own neighborhood spaces most kids have never experienced before. Louisville ECHO helps build a love for science and also an eagerness to experience the outdoors. ”

Stephanie White  
Principal  
King Elementary School



PUBLIC ACCESS - ENTRY FOYER & INTERIOR CLIMBING WALL



PRIMARY FACILITY USE - EDUCATIONAL CLASSROOM SPACE



SECONDARY FACILITY USE - COMMUNITY/SPECIAL EVENT SPACE





PUBLIC ACCESS – FRONT ENTRY



COMMUNITY PROGRAMMING SPACE – GARDEN GROUNDS



*// This initiative emerged from a community-driven planning process supported by the Children & Nature Network and National League of Cities. It supports neighborhood goals by providing a place where children can learn and play outside of school time in nature. We know from our work in cities across the U.S. that this outdoor learning center will deliver additional benefits for children: health, academic performance, emotional resilience, and community connection. //*

Monica Lopez Magee  
Director, Cities and Nature  
Children and Nature Network





*“ The ECHO Program has truly been a blessing for my family. It has opened our eyes to so many possibilities and opportunities for outdoor activities. I love the community events and seeing my kids getting excited to be outdoors. From the Canoemobile, to the ECHO Mobile, to the activities at West Louisville Appreciation Days, I am so thankful for all the things that the ECHO Program makes possible in the community, not just for the kids, but for adults, families. I’m excited to help grow these opportunities as a member of the WLORI Community Council. ”*

Lisa Brents  
Director of Student Services  
Nativity Academy at St. Boniface  
ECHO Parent/WLORI Community  
Council Member



OUTDOOR CLASSROOM SPACE



ACTIVE RECREATION – EDUCATION PROGRAM SPACE





## BUILDING SYSTEMS & LEED

1. RAINWATER MANAGEMENT INFILTRATION BASINS – These stone basins capture and filter runoff from the building and infiltrate stormwater to reduce erosion from runoff.
2. PERMEABLE PAVERS – Pavers capture and filter runoff from the driveway and parking areas before discharging off site.
3. BIOSWALES – Two bioswales capture runoff from the site and driveway to treat and slow down runoff which reduces erosion and pollution downstream.
4. BICYCLE PARKING\* – Four short-term and four long-term bicycle parking stalls have been provided to reduce vehicular traffic and promote healthier staff and visitors. Showers have been provided for staff.
5. ACCESS TO QUALITY TRANSIT\* – A bus stop is being provided to help reduce vehicular traffic to the site.
6. PLANTING PLAN – Exclusively native species have been designated for planting to remove the risk of invasive species detrimentally affecting the site.
7. EROSION PROTECTION & SEDIMENT CONTROL† – Temporary and permanent measures have been designed to reduce sediment and pollutant travel to the Ohio River during and after construction.
8. PRESERVED GREENFIELD AREA† – The building and site footprints have been minimized to preserve over 80% of the original greenfield area on site.
9. GEOTHERMAL SYSTEM† – Provides efficient heating and cooling by using the ground.
10. SOLAR PANELS – A grid-connected, 28 kW photovoltaic electrical power generating system will offset well over 15% of the building's annual energy usage.
11. RAINWATER HARVESTING SYSTEM – Collect rainwater from the roof, store and filter the water to be used for flushing all toilets and urinals. The system will also provide water to a yard hydrant used for watering plants.
12. LT GREEN VEHICLES – The facility will have two level 2 electrical vehicle charging stations to support the use of alternative fuel green vehicles.
13. SS LIGHT POLLUTION REDUCTION† – LED lighting is provided to efficiently light the outdoor areas without affecting the surrounding park areas with light pollution.

\* Outside graphic view

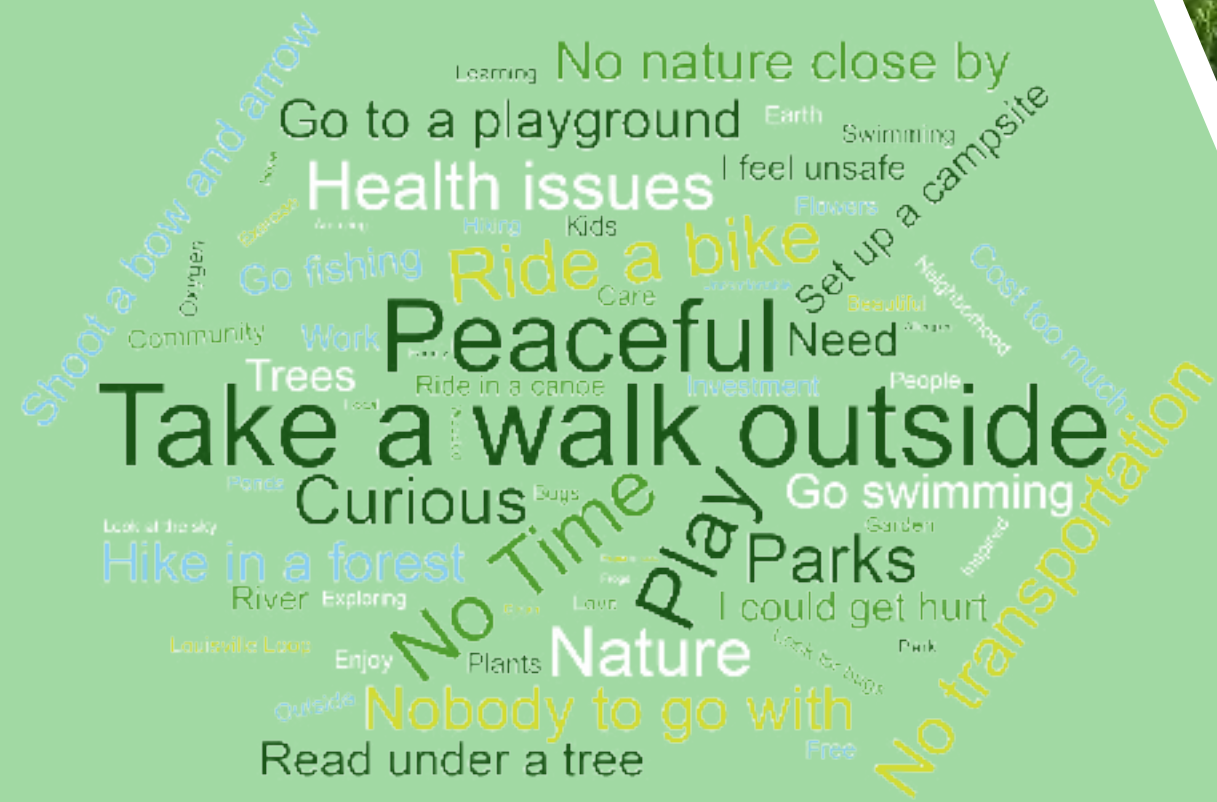
† Item incorporated into construction drawing



# WLORI – SUPPORTING COMMUNITY RESILIENCY AND HEALTH EQUITY

The WLORI plan:

- reflects a decade of effort by Louisville Parks and Recreation to develop holistic nature-based programming responsive to community needs;
- incorporated insights of diverse thought leaders who've identified the critical issues associated with inequitable access to nature;
- benefited from peer-learning with other cities facing similar issues through the Cities Connecting Children to Nature Initiative national collaborative;
- grown with the support from agencies and organizations such as the National Forest Service, the National Recreation and Parks Association, and the Louisville Metro Center for Health Equity; and
- most importantly, incorporated the input of west Louisville residents who have expressed the need to connect to nature and identified barriers to overcome in order to make that connection local and lasting.



“ Louisville’s resilience work is designed to build equity, compassion, and trust throughout Louisville Metro. During months of engagement, community residents identified the importance of having a safe, healthy place for children and adults to play and experience nature. They saw this connection to the outdoors as an equitable way to build resilience and grow community cohesion. ”

Eric Friedlander  
Chief Resilience Director  
The Office of Resilience and  
Community Services



# ENGAGE!

Questions regarding Louisville ECHO programming, including volunteer opportunities?

Email:  
[louisvilleecho@louisvilleky.gov](mailto:louisvilleecho@louisvilleky.gov)  
or visit:  
[www.louisvilleecho.com](http://www.louisvilleecho.com)



Questions regarding West Louisville Outdoor Recreation Initiative implementation?

Please contact:  
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Parks Administrator Louisville Parks and Recreation  
Natural Areas Division  
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502.366.2913

