

Description of Project:

Turn Back the Block has partnered with the University of Georgia Connected Resilient Communities program, facilitated by the Archway Partnership, to advance housing and neighborhood revitalization efforts in Harrisburg. This collaboration brings together Turn Back the Block's established, community-driven approach to homeownership with UGA CRC's expertise in resilience-building, research, and resource development. As a participant in the CRC program, Turn Back the Block will engage with UGA faculty, students, and technical experts to implement three targeted resilience-building projects over the next 12-18 months.

One proposed project is the revitalization of a park in Harrisburg. The park is in the heart of the community and provides recreational activities for community members. However, these amenities are in need of repair and repurpose, and thus the CRC program has connected Turn Back the Block with a UGA College of Environment and Design student to re-conceptualize the park for the community to better the quality of life for citizens in the area. Turn Back the Block, the city of Augusta, and UGA will work collaboratively to engage community members to ensure the park is enhanced and maintained to meet the needs and interests of community members. This effort aims to enhance the park's functionality, improve quality of life for residents, and create a more inviting and accessible space for the community.

Financing Plan

The University of Georgia's Archway Partnership™ has a demonstrated history of securing substantial public and private funding to support community-driven projects. Through strategic partnerships and targeted grant initiatives, the program has successfully leveraged its expertise to attract financial support for local revitalization efforts.

Many Archway partners have utilized project concepts, technical research, and design renderings developed through the program as key components of grant proposals. This approach has proven highly effective in securing significant financial assistance from federal, state, and philanthropic sources, enabling communities to implement transformative projects with lasting impact.

Additionally, the Archway Partnership™ has cultivated strong relationships with private donors, whose contributions have played a crucial role in both community project implementation and the expansion of the program's proven community resilience model. Celebrating its 20th anniversary this year, Archway and UGA's innovative approach to community engagement have won a number of national awards and garnered a return on investment of more than \$7.6 million for Georgia communities last year. This track record positions Turn Back the Block to benefit from similar funding opportunities, ensuring that the partnership with UGA CRC not only enhances project development but also strengthens the financial sustainability of revitalization efforts in Harrisburg.

I. Introduction and Purpose

This document presents two preliminary concept plans for the development of Vernon Forest Park in Augusta, Georgia. Both concepts focus on providing:

- Diverse Recreation: Courts, open lawns, and walking trails
- Community Engagement: Gathering areas, gardens, volunteer opportunities
- Sustainability: Use of native plants, erosion control measures, compliance with local ordinances

The site, under Parcel ID #0351083000, appears zoned for public/park use.¹ Each concept is designed to meet standards set forth in the Augusta Code of Ordinances, relevant state and federal regulations, and local stakeholder input.

II. Concept Plans



LEGEND

- Accessible Spaces
- Existing Park Structure
- Open Space
- Landscaping Space
- Garden Space
- Art/Interactive Space
- Shade Structure

VERNON FOREST PARK PRELIMINARY CONCEPT PLAN #1

Drafted by: Jabari A.S Lottie

A. Concept Plan #1

1. Perimeter Walkway (Yellow): An accessible loop path for walking/jogging.
2. Existing Structure (Orange): Retrofitted as a small event or storage facility.
3. Open Lawn (Green): Flexible turf area for recreation or community events.
4. Garden Area (Light Green): Community Garden plots with potential educational programming.
5. Gathering Space (Blue): Hardscaped event zone for concerts, markets, or gatherings.
6. Multi-Purpose Space (Purple): Large rectangle for sports courts or playgrounds.
7. Shade Structures (Pink): Small pavilions or canopies around high-traffic areas.



LEGEND

- Accessible Spaces
- Existing Park Structure
- Open Space
- Shedding Space
- Garden Space
- Wild Playzone Space
- Shade Structures

VERNON FOREST PARK
PRELIMINARY CONCEPT PLAN #2
Drafted by: Jabari A.S Lottie

B. Concept Plan #2

1. Open Lawn (Green): Large continuous green space for informal activities.
2. Multipurpose Zone (Purple): Flexible sports or communal recreation area.
3. Accessible Spaces (Yellow): Network of ADA-compliant walkways.
4. Gathering Space (Blue): Plaza or pavilion designed for group events.
5. Existing Park Structure (Orange): Possible restrooms, storage, or meeting rooms.
6. Shade Structures (Pink): Pavilions or canopies near seating areas.

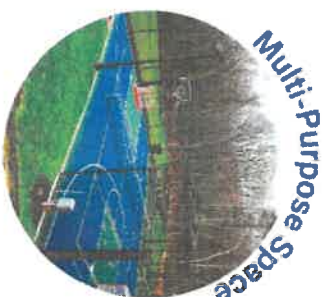
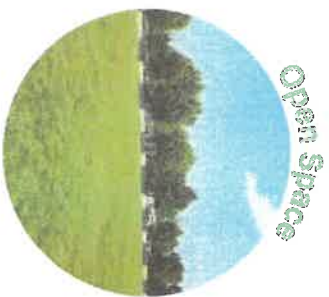
(A community garden could be introduced in a portion of the open lawn if there is sufficient demand and suitable soil conditions.)

VERNON FOREST PARK

PRELIMINARY CONCEPT FEATURE

EXAMPLES

Drafted by: Jabari A.S. Lotie



III. Feasibility Analysis

A. Suitability

- **Zoning & Land Use:** Preliminary zoning checks confirm an allowable park or recreational designation under Augusta Code of Ordinances, Title 8.² In both concepts, major features (courts, gardens, pavilions) are consistent with public park usage.
- **Topography & Soils:** The site has mild slopes conducive to walking trails and multipurpose courts with minimal grading. Soil tests and geotechnical surveys may be required for structural footings and to ensure proper drainage for garden plots.
- **Accessibility & Infrastructure:** Proximity to existing roads and utilities (water, sewer, electricity) supports feasible development. The existing structure can be updated to code for public use.³
- **Environmental Requirements:** Stormwater management will follow Augusta Code Title 5, Chapter 2, as well as the Georgia Erosion and Sedimentation Act.⁴⁵ Where possible, green infrastructure (like rain gardens or bioswales) will be employed.
- **Community Support:** Public feedback sessions and stakeholder surveys are essential to confirm program elements. Past projects in Augusta indicate strong community enthusiasm for green spaces and gardens. Partnerships with local organizations can further improve feasibility.

B. Financial and Operational Feasibility

- **Funding Sources:** Potential avenues include municipal bonds, parks & recreation grants, philanthropic contributions, corporate sponsorships, and fundraising events.
- **Operational Costs:** Post-construction, the park will require routine maintenance (mowing, plant care, cleaning, lighting). Partnerships with local nonprofits or “Adopt-a-Plot” garden initiatives can offset some operational costs.
- **Permitting Path:** Coordinated review among the Augusta-Richmond County Planning Commission, local building officials, and state-level environmental agencies is anticipated. A consolidated permit package typically lowers overhead costs and speeds up approvals.

IV. Timeline for Implementation

Below is a comprehensive schedule, illustrating major milestones and activities for both Concept Plan #1 and Concept Plan #2. Actual durations can vary based on funding availability, permit processing, and weather.

1. **Phase 1: Pre-Design & Community Engagement (Months 1–2)**
 - Conduct detailed site surveys (topographic, environmental).
 - Host public meetings to gather input on key features (sports courts, gardens, event space).

- Refine project goals based on community feedback.
 - 2. Phase 2: Design Development & Permitting (Months 3–6)
 - Finalize schematic designs for the chosen concept (or a hybrid).
 - Prepare and submit permit applications (zoning clearances, building permits, stormwater).
 - Commission geotechnical studies to inform foundation design for buildings and courts.
 - 3. Phase 3: Construction Documentation & Bidding (Months 7–9)
 - Complete construction drawings (architectural, civil, landscape, mechanical/electrical if needed).
 - Compile bid packages and advertise for qualified contractors.
 - Evaluate contractor bids, secure final funding commitments.
 - 4. Phase 4: Site Preparation & Early Construction (Months 10–13)
 - Demolition/Clearing: Remove any debris or unsuitable materials.
 - Earthwork & Grading: Level areas for multipurpose courts, walkways, and lawns; install erosion controls.
 - Utility Infrastructure: Update water/sewer lines; ensure electrical access for lighting and structures.
 - 5. Phase 5: Core Construction (Months 14–18)
 - Paving & Hardscapes: Install perimeter trails, event plazas, and sports courts.
 - Building Upgrades: Retrofit the existing structure; construct new shade pavilions.
 - Initial Landscaping: Begin planting trees and large shrubs; prepare garden areas if relevant.
 - 6. Phase 6: Final Landscaping & Amenities (Months 19–21)
 - Garden Plots & Irrigation: Build raised beds, test irrigation lines, add soil amendments.
 - Furniture & Lighting: Place benches, trash receptacles, and wayfinding signs; install lighting fixtures.
 - Safety & Code Inspections: Ensure compliance with building codes and ADA requirements.
 - 7. Phase 7: Opening & Programming (Month 22+)
 - Final Walkthrough: Conduct final inspections with Augusta Planning & Building departments.
 - Community Launch: Plan a ribbon-cutting event; invite local officials, partners, and residents.
 - Ongoing Maintenance: Transition to routine operations, guided by a detailed maintenance manual and staff/volunteer training.
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V. Expanded Budget Overview

Below are detailed estimates for both concepts, incorporating potential variations. Values reference data from RSMeans and publicly available information on similar park developments in Georgia.⁶

A. Cost Breakdown (Applies to Both Concepts)

Category	Estimated Range	Notes
1. Pre-Design & Permits	\$10,000 – \$20,000	Surveys, initial architectural/engineering fees, community outreach
2. Design & Engineering	\$30,000 – \$50,000	Construction drawings, stormwater plans, geotechnical studies
3. Site Preparation & Utilities	\$50,000 – \$70,000	Grading, clearing, basic erosion controls, hooking into water/sewer/power
4. Hardscapes & Trails	\$35,000 – \$50,000	Paving perimeter paths, event plaza, or sports surfaces (e.g., asphalt or concrete)
5. Structures & Buildings	\$50,000 – \$75,000	Shade pavilions, renovations of existing building, restrooms if included
6. Landscaping & Garden Install	\$25,000 – \$35,000	Trees, shrubs, lawn seeding, raised garden beds, irrigation systems
7. Furnishings & Lighting	\$20,000 – \$30,000	Benches, trash bins, lighting fixtures, signage
8. Contingency (10–15%)	\$22,000 – \$48,000	Covers unforeseen site issues, design changes, or material cost fluctuations
**Totals (Approx.)	\$242,000 – \$378,000	The actual budget depends on final design scope, contractor bids, and materials selected

B. Potential Funding Sources

1. Local Government Funding: Allocations from Augusta Parks & Recreation budget, SPLOST (Special-Purpose Local-Option Sales Tax), or municipal bonds.
2. State/Federal Grants: Possible matching grants through Georgia’s Department of Natural Resources or federal Community Development Block Grants (CDBG).
3. Private & Nonprofit Partnerships: Philanthropic foundations, corporate sponsorships, or local nonprofits (e.g., Master Gardener programs) often support green space improvements.
4. Community Fundraising: Grassroots campaigns, crowdfunding, or “Friends of the Park” events.

VI. Conclusion and Next Steps

By presenting two Preliminary Concept Plans—each with a viable layout, robust feasibility support, and a clear path to compliance with Augusta regulations—this proposal aims to guide Vernon Forest Park’s successful transformation. To advance:

1. Select or Merge a Preferred Concept based on community and stakeholder feedback.
 2. Refine Engineering & Seek Final Approvals from the Augusta-Richmond County Planning Commission and relevant state agencies.
 3. Secure Funding through a combination of municipal, grant, and private contributions.
 4. Begin Construction following the expanded timeline, ensuring each phase meets quality and regulatory standards.
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References

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3. International Code Council. *International Building Code (IBC) 2018*. Country Club Hills, IL: ICC, 2018.
4. Augusta Code of Ordinances. *Title 5, Stormwater Management and Flood Control*, Chapter 2. Accessed March 26, 2025.
5. Georgia General Assembly. *Georgia Erosion and Sedimentation Act*. O.C.G.A. §12-7-1 et seq.
6. RSMeans. *Building Construction Cost Data*. Norwell, MA: RSMeans, 2025.
7. Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center. "Native Plants Database." Accessed March 26, 2025. <https://www.wildflower.org/>
8. U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission. *Public Playground Safety Handbook*. Washington, DC: CPSC, 2015.