# KEEP IT QUEER

## Supporting Queerness and Queer Belonging in Denny Blaine Park

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University of Washington

**Abstract**

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## Supporting Queerness and Queer Belonging in Denny Blaine Park

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Chair of the Supervisory Committee:
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Denny Blaine Park has been enjoyed by queer and nudist parkgoers for decades. Past tensions, an active lawsuit, and an improvement plan pose threats and opportunities to the park's culture and history. This thesis proposes ways that reimagined designs for Denny Blaine Park can support queerness and queer belonging in space. In order to arrive at these design proposals, two questions were first explored: how can design be done queerly, and what do queer community members want or need in Denny Blaine Park? Queerness was defined in terms of sexuality and gender, as well as a broader ethical framework founded upon subversion of harmful powers, collective connections between beings, the valuation of multiple ways of being, and the creation of more just futures. Through literature and precedent studies, methods of universal design, material reuse, queer planting design, and affirmational signage were identified as queer design strategies supportive of these values. To ascertain and center community interests, a queered process of community engagement was practiced to learn from human and more-than-human parkgoers and inhabitants. The takeaways of precedent studies and community engagement were combined with queer methodologies of community-driven design, universal design, material reuse, queer planting design, and affirmational signage to create three potential reimagined designs for Denny Blaine Park. By having a foundation in queer ethics, these proposals aim to break barriers that inhibit queerness and queer belonging in Denny Blaine Park. In doing so, these designs strive for more just and loving futures within this beloved queer space.

A thesis for the partial fulfillment of the degree
for a Master of Landscape Architecture

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# *List of Acronyms and Abbreviations*



**2SLGBTQIA+:** Two-Spirit (2S), Lesbian (L), Gay (G), Bisexual (B), Transgender (T), Queer or Questioning (Q), Intersex (I), Asexual (A). (San Diego State University 2025)

**City:** City of Seattle

**BIPOC:** Black, Indigenous, and people of color (Davidson 2024)

**DB Park:** Denny Blaine Park

**FoDB:** Friends of Denny Blaine Park

**IRB:** Institutional Review Board

**LGBT:** Lesbian (L), Gay (G), Bisexual (B), Transgender (T)

**LGBTQ+:** Lesbian (L), Gay (G), Bisexual (B), Transgender (T), Queer or Questioning (Q)

**OWW:** One-World World

**QTL:** Queer The Land

**QT2BIPOC:** Queer, transgender, Two-Spirit Black/Indigenous/people of color (Queer the Land n.d.)

**TGNB:** Transgender, nonbinary, or gender-questioning (“Project SPARK Interim Report” 2025)

# Acknowledgments



*As this thesis is focused on Denny Blaine Park, I want to begin by acknowledging the Hah-Tshu-Ab'sh or "Inside People" of the Duwamish Tribe that have stewarded these lands since time immemorial ("Seattle Neighborhoods: Denny-Blaine" n.d.). Denny Blaine Park, like many landscapes in Seattle, is named after the colonists that laid claim to this space, while the Indigenous peoples who were forcibly displaced often go unrecognized. I write here to honor the Duwamish peoples upon whose lands I live and work, and honor how the legacies and lifeways of gender-variant or Two-Spirit people far precede the heteronormative standards established in this country today (Indian Health Service n.d.).*

This thesis is the product of so many thoughtful, generous, and imaginative people to whom I am forever grateful. Thank you all for your help, this project would not be where it is without you.

To the community members who took time out of their days to engage in this project, thank you for sharing your knowledge, experiences, and visions for queer futures at Denny Blaine Park. I hope I did justice to your contributions in the reimaginations of this space.

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**I have listed these individuals and groups to express my gratitude for their help and guidance in this thesis. However, this thesis does not represent the views of any of these individuals or groups. This thesis is an exploratory student-led project with no city, professional, or group affiliation.**

# Introduction



# 01

*“The present is not enough. It is impoverished and toxic for queers and other people who do not feel the privilege of majoritarian belonging, normative tastes, and ‘rational’ expectations” - José Muñoz, Cruising Utopia, 2009, 27*

*“A civilization based on the love of life is a far better option than one based on its destruction” - Arturo Escobar, Designs for the Pluriverse, 2017, 14*

*“Are we brave enough to imagine beyond the boundaries of ‘the real’ and then do the hard work of sculpting reality from our dreams?” - adrienne maree brown, Octavia’s Brood, 2015, 5*

*“We design our world, and our world designs us back” - Arturo Escobar, Designs for the Pluriverse, 2017, 4*

## BACKGROUND, QUEER, QUEERNESS

In the face of unabashed and emboldened bigotry, hatred, exploitation, and persecution of peoples within our present World, we must demand and enact design solutions for just, loving, and life-sustaining realities. While change is slow wrought and oppressive powers of colonialism, capitalism, and heterosexism persist, spaces claimed by and celebratory of those with marginalized identities are imperative as areas of safety, reprieve, freedom, and celebration. In this thesis, I will argue that queering space and queer spaces are therefore a solution and a necessity to the crises faced historically and presently in our World, and offer ways to “sculpt” new worlds “from our dreams” (brown 2015, 50).

The words “queering,” “queer,” and “queerness” are nebulous and challenging - if not impossible and antithetical - to define. As such, the “definitions” that I will provide for these terms are not exhaustive and are highly variable within the Two-Spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or questioning, intersex, asexual (2SLGBTQIA+) community (San Diego State University 2025). I provide these definitions only to illuminate the framework of my thinking, writing, and design, as “queering,” “queer,” and “queerness” are identities, qualities, and ways of being that centrally guide my thesis work.

As described by decolonial feminist theorist Emma Peréz, queer can be understood as a noun (“to be queer”), a verb (“to queer”), and an adjective (“to exhibit queer ways”) (Canli 2017, 28; Peréz 2006, 4). In other words, human and more-than-human entities can be queer, their actions can be queer, and their ways of being can be queer. I begin by describing queer in relation to gender and sexual identity, in which I define “queer” as all who hold non-cisgender and non-heterosexual identities (“Understanding the LGBTQ+ Community” n.d.). When I make reference to “the queer community” within this paper, this definition describes the group of people to whom I am referring.

However, “queer/queering/queerness” extends far beyond gender and sexual identity, as informed by interweaving scholarship from queer, feminist, and decolonial theorists. Fundamentally, queerness can be understood as anything “at odds with the [normalized],

### What is considered "queer"?

*Queer encompasses all non-cisgender and non-heterosexual identities*

### What is considered "queerness"?

*Queerness as noun, verb, and adjective*

*Queerness subverts One-World World norms and powers*

*Queerness is collective and relational*

*Queerness embraces multiple ways of being*

*Queerness is imagining and creating more just futures*

**Figure 1.1:** Queer and Queerness. Guiding understandings of queer and queerness for this thesis project. These understandings of queerness are inspired by Canli (2017), Pérez (2006), Escobar (2017), Muñoz (2009), and "Understanding the LGBTQ+ Community" (n.d.).




**Figure 1.2:** The One-World World. The One-World World (OWW) is an amalgamation of destructive and toxic power structures that historically and presently oppress those with marginalized identities. OWW term coined by Law (2011) and adapted by Escobar (2017).

the [legitimatized], and the dominant" (Halperin 1995, 62). These "normal" and "dominant" forces include those of gender, sexuality, heterosexism, patriarchy, capitalism, and white supremacy (Minden 2021, 19). Taken together, these power structures can be understood as the "One-World World" (OWW), or "the world that has arrogated itself for the right to be 'the' world, subjecting all other worlds to its own terms or, worse, to nonexistence" (Escobar 2017, 67; Law 2011). Shown in **Figure 1.2**, the OWW suppresses those with non-normative experiences, identities, or ways of being, in an attempt to snuff out "otherness" and maintain the supremacy of these privileged identities. In regards to gender and sexuality, the OWW recognizes and idolizes heterosexuality and gender binaries (man/woman) while invalidating and attacking queerness. Such vitriolic attitudes and actions can be seen at a national scale, as 125 anti-trans bills were passed in the United States during 2025 ("2025 Anti-Trans Bills" n.d.). This legislation is emblematic of the OWW aggression towards those it deems as "other," with intent to oppress or harm marginalized peoples. Within the built environments, the OWW designs for those with privileged identities (White, male, cisgender, able-bodied, wealthy, young, etc.) at the exclusion of those with marginalized identities. Examples of OWW influences include the construction of gendered bathrooms and limited physical accessibility of public spaces, where designs value cisgender and able-bodied ways of being while suppressing multiplicity. OWW design is also blatantly seen in "hostile architecture" practices such as spiked windowsills, segmented benches, and rocky pavement that prevent sitting, resting, or sleeping (Erlenbusch 2023, 4-7). These design features deliberately dissuade "undesirable" use by houseless individuals, who are disproportionately Black and Indigenous (Erlenbusch 2023, 4).

In contrast to the OWW, queerness must instead be founded upon the recognition of a "pluriverse," or "a world where many worlds fit," as described by the Zapatistas of Chiapas (Escobar 2017, xvi, 15). By embracing these multiple worlds and ways of being,




**Figure 1.3:** DB Park in Seattle. Location of Denny Blaine Park in Seattle, WA. GIS Data Source: City of Seattle ArcGIS Online 2025.

queerness respects the "interconnectedness of all life" and "radical equality of all beings" (Escobar 2017, xvi, 12). In the queer pluriverse, beings are equal across identities of gender, sexuality, age, race, socioeconomic class, ability, and beyond. Not only are humans equal and interconnected to one another, but we are inseparable from the more-than-human worlds around us. The OWW, "built without attachment to place, nature, landscape, space, and time," has led to the climate crisis we face today (Escobar 2017, xvi, 12). In contrast, queer futures instead rely on sustainable and collective practices. Building upon these principles, queerness ultimately aims to create more just, hopeful, and loving futures, or the "rejection of a here and now and an insistence on potentiality or concrete possibility for another world" (Muñoz 2009, 1, 11; Escobar 2017, 14). **Figure 1.1** provides a summary of this thesis' guiding understandings of queerness as it relates to gender and sexuality, and broader worldviews and ethics.

For much of this thesis, I alternate between using queer as noun/verb/adjective to describe queer beings (humans, more-than-humans, materials, landscapes, spaces, etc.), actions (to act in a way that practices queer ethics, or to do/make something queer), or ways of being (to describe the qualities of something as queer) (Canli 2017, 28; Peréz 2006, 4). When referring to "queered/queerly/queering" in Chapter 4, these specific terms frame differences in queer precedent studies and design methods. The particular utilization of "queer" for those precedents will be expanded upon in Chapter 4.

## DENNY BLAINE AS QUEER SPACE

For this thesis, I have selected Denny Blaine Park (DB Park) as a site that illuminates the real-world significance and applicability of "queer/queering/queerness" within space. DB Park, a roughly 2-acre park located in Seattle, Washington directly along Lake Washington, has been documented as a queer and nudist recreation space as early as the 1970s-1980s (Kimseylove 2025, 6). **Figure 1.3** provides relevant context for DB Park's location within Seattle. Nestled amongst a highly affluent neighborhood that largely reflects OWW privileges and power, DB Park continues to exist as a pocket of the "pluriverse." This park offers freedom for many worlds, as a space claimed by those with non-normative sexual, gender, and bodily expressions. Not all nudist parkgoers at DB Park self-identify as queer in terms of sexuality or gender. However, as I've defined "queerness" above, I understand nudity as a form of "queerness" more broadly since it represents freedom and subversion of the OWW's "acceptable" clothing standards.

Neighbors to DB Park, City officials, and police have historically and presently subjected queer peoples and ways of being to normative tastes and binaries. In a recent example, in May of 2025, police officers incorrectly told parkgoers that being naked was illegal at DB Park, and prohibited a transgender woman from returning to the park for a week due to her nudity (McCall 2025c). This woman was later told by Seattle Police Chief Shon Barnes that she could return to the beach once he conceded that being "'nude is free expression, not illegal'" (McCall 2025d, para. 15). However, in the face of threats, passionate community members have maintained DB Park as a space for queerness and nudity through resistance, collective action, and organizing. Recently in 2024-2025, the City of Seattle (City) allocated funds to make improvements to DB Park (Engage Seattle Parks n.d.; Schulkin 2024). Soon after, a neighborhood association filed a lawsuit that cited concerns of public sex and indecent exposure ("Denny Blaine Park for All" 2025, 2). A trial pending for spring 2026 will determine whether the "abatement plan" - a chain-link fence dividing that park into "clothing required" and "clothing optional" areas - is deemed substantial in addressing these concerns (Gaitán 2025; Carder 2025b).

## RESEARCH QUESTIONS & METHODS

As demonstrated above, DB Park is both a beloved and contentious space. Past tensions, an active lawsuit, and an ongoing improvement plan pose threats and opportunities to the park's culture and history. Given DB Park's importance, this thesis seeks to address a central research question shown: how can DB Park be reimagined to support queerness and queer belonging in space? I attempted to answer this overarching question through two sub-questions. First, what do queer community members want or need in DB Park? Second, how can these designs be done queerly? In exploring these answers through processes of community engagement and precedent studies, I reached the goal of this thesis: creating a series of three proposed site designs that aimed to emplace and embrace queer belonging at DB Park. The three research questions, methods, and final project deliverables for this thesis are shown on the following page in **Figure 1.4**.

Community engagement was the essential core of my design goals and process. Community-driven design is a queer method that strives for collectivity, relationality, and bottom-up ideation and creation. At DB Park, I believe the people who use, protect, and love the park are those who should propose what happens to it. I therefore aimed to ground this thesis in a survey and interviews with 2SLGBTQIA+ parkgoers. Through these methods, I hoped to learn what queer community members wanted or needed in the park, and implement those ideas in the proposed park redesigns. While this document includes a collection of community insights, this thesis is not intended to be comprehensive of the totality of user experiences at DB Park. Future design requires longer collaboration with more community

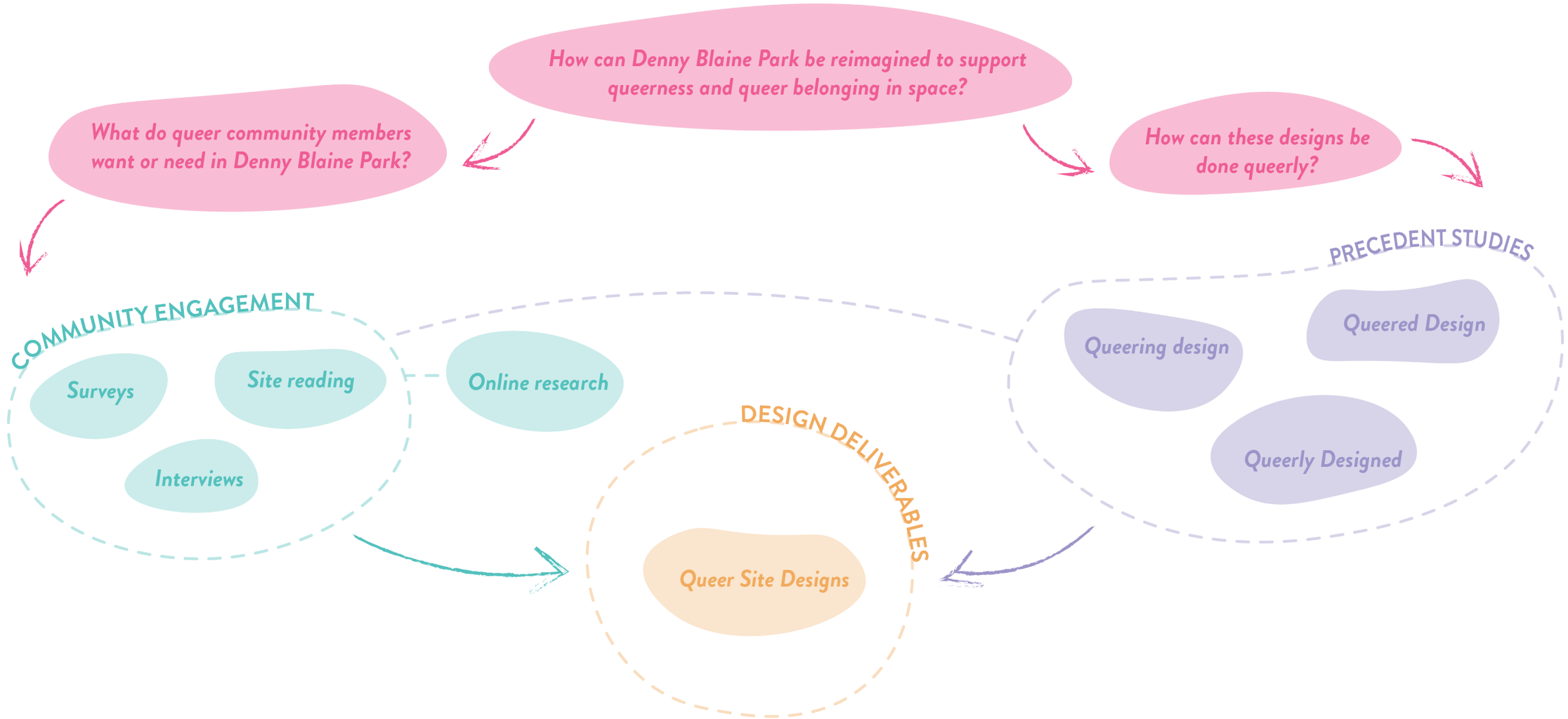



**Figure 1.4:** Research Questions. Research questions, methods, and design deliverables for this thesis project.

members than was possible for the scope of this thesis. Despite its limitations, I hope this document can serve as a useful reference for queer individuals and organizers who enjoy and advocate for DB Park. The concluding designs were created to visually represent proposed interventions that support the wants and needs of queer community members. Conversely, if community members disagree with any changes I propose to DB Park, having a frame of reference for changes that people don't want can also - hopefully - be useful in furthering discussions on topics that people are passionate about.

Last, this thesis is an exploratory student-led project with no city, professional, or group affiliation.

# *Why do Queer Spaces Matter? Why Does Queering Design Matter?*





## 02

*"We don't just need bread, we need roses, and Denny Blaine is our roses." - Rachel, "Friends of Denny-Blaine Park," 2023, 1:20:32*

*"The gay beach represents freedom. The freedom to be naked, the freedom to check out babes and know that I might actually have a chance with one of them, and most of all - the freedom to be overtly, loudly queer in public." - Mary Emily O'Hara, "How the Gay Nude Beach Became My Memorial Day Tradition", 2018, para. 11*

*"Right now we are so in love with one another that we need to cool down, to submerge until everything disappears so that when we surface and open our eyes, we are newly amazed. That it is all still here. That we are all still here." - Sabrina Imbler, How Far the Light Reaches, 2022, 186*

### WHAT IS BELONGING?

Belonging is deeply tied to queers, queerness, and queer spaces such as DB Park. In the OWW, queer people continue to be shown, told, or made to feel we don't belong. This suppression has had deleterious effects on our well-being, as mental, cognitive, and physical health disparities disproportionately impact queer people (Lampe et al. 2024, 41-43). In resistance, resilience, and joy, queer communities have created our own spaces and support networks to embrace queer multiplicity, enact queer collectivism and care, and demand our belonging. Belonging, found to improve mental and physical health, acts as a necessary remedy to OWW oppression (Michalski et al. 2020). DB Park acts as one such space of queer belonging, holding immense importance for the safety and wellbeing of queer communities within and beyond Seattle.

Before delving into ways in which queer spaces such as DB Park support senses of belonging, a framework to understand "belonging" is needed. Like "queer/queerness/queering," belonging is difficult to encapsulate as it is "not reducible to a simple proxy or singular element" (powell & Menendian 2024, 140).

By coalescing various definitions from fields of psychology, social justice-oriented work, and design, I aim to provide a beginning conceptualization of "belonging" for the scope of this thesis.

In psychology, belonging has been defined as "the need for positive regard and the desire for interpersonal connection" (Rogers 1951; Allen 2020, 2). In her book *The Psychology of Belonging*, Kelly-Ann Allen describes ways in which one's sense of belonging can be associated with people, places, memories, objects, experiences, events, countries, lands, sounds, smells, textures, tastes, and sensations (Allen 2020, 3). She additionally posits that "fitting in" is in many ways antithetical to a sense of belonging (Allen 2020, 5). To "fit in," one is required to change themselves in order to achieve acceptance (Allen 2020, 5). Conversely, one truly "belongs" when they are embraced for being who they are (Allen 2020, 5).

From a social justice perspective, john a. powell and Stephen Menendian provide a "four-part definition of belonging rooted in inclusion, recognition or visibility, a

sense of connection, and empowerment" in their book *Belonging without Othering* (powell & Menendian 2024, 10). Similarly to Allen's differentiation between "fitting in" and "belonging," powell and Menendian highlight the important distinction between inclusion and belonging. Inclusion, while a component of belonging, does not go far enough in supporting marginalized peoples. Inclusion is limited to "a demand to admit members" of excluded groups into spaces or institutions, but can undermine belonging if people are tokenized or marginalized (powell & Menendian 2024, 134). Additionally, inclusion is "partial or conditional" and expects marginalized people to "adapt or conform" to the space they enter, rather than demanding institutional change (powell & Menendian 2024, 135). Conversely, belonging (as the name implies) makes people feel like they belong and "have a say in the organization, design, construction or reconstruction" of institutions (powell & Menendian 2024, 136). While inclusion only requires entry to spaces, belonging occurs through active effort and change, and therefore "demands more" of participants/institutions (powell & Menendian 2024, 138).

powell and Menendian continue by elaborating upon the four identified elements of belonging. First, they state that inclusion is required (powell & Menendian 2024, 141). Second, one needs a sense of connection to another person, community, group, or institution (powell & Menendian 2024, 141). This connection is often related to feelings of "attachment, fondness, safety, or warmth" (powell & Menendian 2024, 141). Third, belonging requires visibility or recognition, or people feeling "their social group is seen, respected, and valued" (powell & Menendian 2024, 142). Last, people need agency. Belonging requires individuals to have "the power to act and the potential to influence" (powell & Menendian 2024, 142). Having agency goes beyond "giving people a voice," and rather respects individual's influence and "say" (powell & Menendian 2024, 143).

Belonging has also been explored in the field of design. In her book Design for Belonging, Susie Wise states that belonging is "being accepted and invited to participate; being part of something and having the opportunity to show up as yourself... being able to raise issues and confront harsh truths as a full member of a community" (Wise 2022, 3). She elaborates that "it is the opportunity... to learn, live, and love, to be honored, encouraged, and allowed to develop as you and as part of groups that develop and celebrate your identities, needs, and contributions" (Wise 2022, 7). Wise's collaborator Christine Wong Yap succinctly describes belonging as "[happening] when people feel safe, seen, and accepted" (Wise 2022, 19). One's sense of belonging also involves different layers, including one's "identities, [their] group or groups, [their] larger communities" (Wise 2022, 21). In short, belonging can be understood as the acceptance, inclusion, authenticity, contribution, safety, and visibility of a person and their identities on both an individual and community basis.

Wise goes on to describe a set of "moments" in which a sense of belonging can be impacted. These moments include the invitation, entering, participating, contributing, diverging and exiting (Wise 2022, 32-33). As this thesis is focused on designing a physical space - DB Park - several of these concepts apply most directly. The invitation is "the first encounter" that someone has with a space (Wise 2022, 35). Depending on the need or intent, invitations can fall on spectrums of clear to mysterious, public to private, open to closed, accessible to inaccessible, widely announced to word-of-mouth, large-scale to intimate, high-tech to low tech, and requiring prior knowledge or showing up as a novice (Wise 2022, 38). When considering landscape design, invitations may be offered in the form of informational signage, built elements or entries, and method of transportation/access. Similarly, the actual "entering" of a space can foster a sense of belonging, with entrances acting as a "portal, threshold, or welcome mat" that "set the stage" for engagement with a space (Wise 2022, 32). Next, participation and contribution support a sense of belonging by showing people that their presence, expressions, and actions matter in shaping the space (Wise 2022, 47, 57). As this relates to landscapes, design can support contributions through elements that encourage reclamation and adaptation of space by users or parkgoers. Last, diverging and exiting are significant in belonging, as design should support "both convergence and divergence" and invite pluralism (Wise 2022, 76). Spaces should support a range of users, the myriad ways people "converge" through usage of space, and ways in which their uses may "diverge" or they choose to fully exit the space. This may translate to having an array of choices for rest, activity, gathering, solitude, and motion to support one's sense of belonging in a landscape.

By melding the works of Allen, Wise, powell, and Menendian, I began to conceptualize a fuller understanding of belonging. **Figure 2.1** illustrates core components of belonging derived from these authors that informed my work in this thesis.

Applying these concepts to DB Park's past, present, and future allows us to see where queer belonging has been supported, undermined, or targeted within this landscape. Reframing each tenet as a question becomes necessary to ensure that a sense of belonging for queer parkgoers is centered in the redesign of this space, or where it falls short. For instance, did past events allow parkgoers to feel safe and seen? Will a proposed design choice support connection and agency? Throughout the duration of this project, these guiding definitions of belonging, in conjunction with values of "queering," will inform my design proposals for DB Park.

## WHY DOES BELONGING MATTER?

While belonging may intrinsically feel important, an abundance of research has corroborated the significance of belonging for mental and physical health. Social connection has been related to "reduced mortality (Holt-Lunstad et al. 2010), improved recovery rates following disease (Cohen & Janicki-Deverts 2009) and improved immune functioning (Cacioppo et al. 2011)" (Allen 2020, 44). A 2010 meta-analysis study found that stronger social relationships indicated a 50% increased likelihood of survival of study participants (Holt-Lunstad et al. 2020, 1, 9). This percentage improvement was comparable to quitting smoking (Holt-Lunstad et al. 2020, 14). Another study of 703,304 individuals also found community belonging to be a predictor of general and mental health across all life stages (Michalski et al. 2020).

Studies focusing specifically on belonging in queer individuals found similar improvements in health and well-being. In a study of 99 gay, lesbian, and bisexual-identifying participants aged 14-18, researchers found lower levels of depression in relation to a greater sense of belonging (McCallum & McLaren 2011, 87, 93). Another study of 4,778 youth who identified as transgender found belonging to be associated with lower drug use (Day et al. 2018, 11). Two studies focused on lesbians in Australia similarly associated one's sense of belonging with lower levels of depression and a reduced relationship between body image dissatisfaction and depression (McLaren 2009, 10; Hanley & McLaren 2015, 91).

Conversely, a lack of belonging has been found to be "a key risk factor for loneliness," which has been linked to "an increased risk of several mental and physical health problems" (Allen 2020, 43). The negative mental health effects caused by an absence of belonging can be exacerbated for those "who display behaviors, attributes, or abilities that deviate from the so-called social norm," including queer people (Allen 2020, 5). These heightened impacts are particularly concerning due to the presence of mental, cognitive, and physical health disparities between queer and non-queer adults (Lampe et al. 2024, 41-43). LGBTQ+ adults have been found to have higher likelihoods of depression, anxiety disorders, and health risk behaviors including suicidal ideation, social isolation, and loneliness (Lampe et al. 2024, 41). Additionally, queer adults were found to have higher risk of premature cognitive aging and decline (Lampe et al. 2024, 41). Further disparities were found in relation to chronic health conditions, disabilities, substance abuse, cardiovascular disease, and chronic pain management (Lampe et al. 2024, 43).

Taken together, these belonging-related stressors and health disparities illuminate the social crisis facing queer communities today. However, as demonstrated by the research above, fostering a sense of belonging in queer communities can help alleviate these harms. The research of Allen, powell, Menendian, and Wise all offer ways in which belonging can be defined and developed for DB Park. Wise specifically elaborates how spatial design can support belonging through moments of invitation, entering, participating, contributing, diverging, and exiting. By striving to emplace queer belonging in the DB Park's reimagined designs, this project ultimately aims to support the health and well-being of parkgoers.

## WHY DO QUEER SPACES MATTER?

Queer spaces are significant for several reasons as shown in **Figure 2.2**. First, they support the mental, physical, and social well-being of queer people. Second, the safety and community they offer have become increasingly needed in the face of heightened political persecution. Third, protection of existing queer spaces matters due to threats of exclusion and erasure posed by gentrification and assimilation. The benefits offered and threats faced within queer spaces demonstrate why DB Park holds so much meaning to Seattle's queer community, and why they must be safeguarded and elevated moving forward.

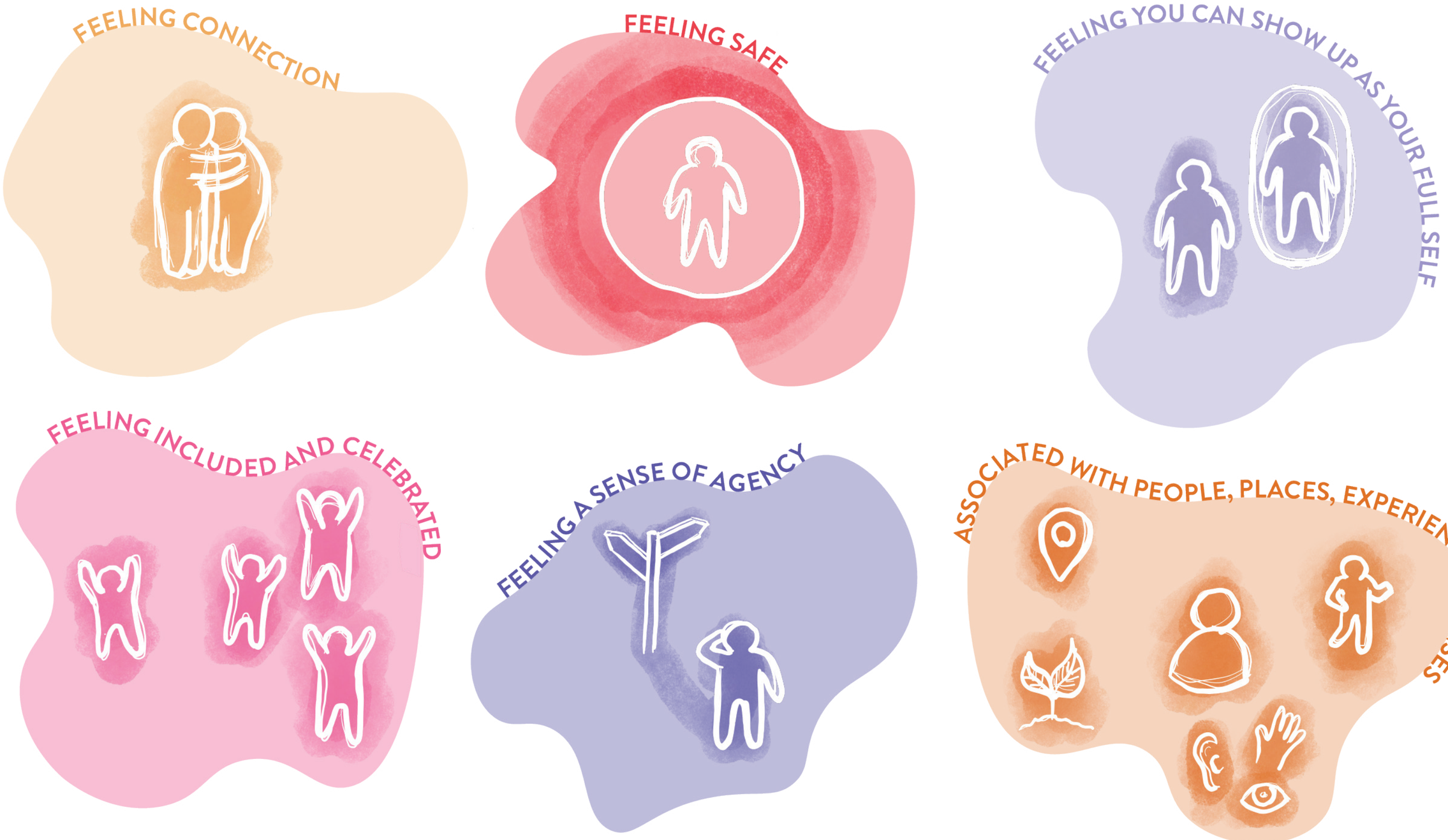



**Figure 2.1:** Components of Belonging. Core components of belonging that guide this thesis, inspired by the research and works of Allen (2020), Wise (2022), powell and Menendian (2024).




**Figure 2.2:** Importance of Queer Spaces. Queer spaces are important for numerous reasons. First, they are associated with mental, physical, and social benefits. Second, these benefits are needed in the face of heightened political and social threats. Third, these remaining safe havens must be protected against external and internal forces that have led to their reduction or dissolution.

## Mental, Physical, and Social Benefits

Queer spaces are vital in fostering a sense of belonging for queer individuals and communities. In the context of queer/gay neighborhoods, these spaces have been found to offer social support, validation, a sense of shared identity and liberation, possibility for sexual exploration, and freedom for self-expression (Doan & Higgins 2011, 18; Valentine & Skelton 2003, 853-854, 856, 86). In an Atlanta case-study investigating the effects of gentrification on LGBT neighborhoods, researchers Doan and Higgins found evidence "[illustrating] the importance of having a… physical location in which LGBT community can gather for coffee, for socializing, or just for finding potential partners" (Doan & Higgins 2011, 14). Researchers also found that queer neighborhoods are perceived as more tolerant, offer safety, contribute to community-building, and allow queer people to live their day-to-day life "with no more hassle than that experienced by non-LGBT people" (Doan & Higgins 2011, 18). However, the authors noted this data underrepresented



Black and Latino queer-identifying participants, and overrepresented White queer-identifying participants, leading to limitations in their research (Doan & Higgins 2011, 9). While more research is needed to reflect the experiences of queer-identified Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) and communities, the values illuminated in this study begin to align with the qualities of belonging previously described (Davidson 2024). In these queer neighborhoods in Atlanta, people felt inclusion, connection, safety, and the ability to show up as themselves without hassle or prejudice. Although this article pertains to queer neighborhoods, these trends may inform parkgoers' perceptions and experiences of belonging in recreation spaces such as DB Park.

The significance of queer space in supporting belonging was additionally reinforced in a UK-based study by Gill Valentine and Tracey Skelton. Researchers studied participants' relationship to "the (queer) scene" through interviews with 20 self-identified young lesbians and gay men (Valentine & Skelton 2003, 850). Findings revealed the scene to be a "positive, liberating and supportive space" that supported a sense of "identity, community, and belonging" (Valentine & Skelton 2003, 863). This queer space also offered validation and an "opportunity to step out of the heteronormative world where they often feel marginalized" (Valentine & Skelton 2003, 855). Similarly to Doan and Higgins' findings, this research reveals themes of connection, authenticity, and visibility as indicators of belonging being reinforced through queer space. However, as Valentine and Skelton's study only engaged with gay and lesbian-identified people, their findings omit the experiences and perspectives of bisexual, transgender, gender-nonconforming, and sexually- and gender-diverse community members beyond gays and lesbians.

## Necessity in Times of Heightened Threats

The positive mental, physical, and social benefits arising from queer spaces are becoming increasingly necessary in the face of heightened OWW threats. These threats come from outside and inside the queer community, and range from national to local scales. Some examples include those posed by anti-2SLGBTQIA+ political administrations in the United States and internationally, gentrification of queer spaces by predominantly cisgender/heterosexual communities, and assimilation to OWW norms within queer spaces.

### POLITICAL AND SOCIAL THREATS

At a national scale, Donald Trump began his second term as president with a slew of executive orders targeting transgender and nonbinary people. From a PBS article posted in February of 2025 - 12 days after Trump took office - these orders included only recognizing biological sexes to include male and female, only using "M" and "F" markers on passports based on the federal government's restricted understanding of biological sex, making efforts to ban transgender service members from the military, and calling to stop federal funds from supporting gender-affirming medical care for transgender youth, among others (Mulvihill 2025). All together, 125 anti-trans bills were passed in 2025 across 29 states, along with 109 national bills ("2025 Anti-Trans Bills" 2025). This staggering number reflects only a portion of the 1,022 anti-trans bills that were considered the same year ("2025 Anti-Trans Bills" 2025). These bigoted laws reflect and fuel a larger social crisis faced by the queer community, particularly transgender, nonbinary, or gender-questioning (TGNB) people ("Project SPARK Interim Report" 2025). In response to such injustice and harm, having queer spaces for safety, support, community, belonging, and overall well-being becomes essential.

### THREATS OF GENTRIFICATION

While queer spaces are increasingly vital, they face threats of erasure through gentrification. In Seattle, Capitol Hill has been the center of the gay community for decades (Romano 2015b). However, between 2000 and 2012, the neighborhood faced a 23% drop of same-sex couple households, compared to an overall increase city-wide of same-sex couples by 52% (Balk 2014). Sociologist Amin Chaziana explains this change as a result of broader acceptance and integration of queer people, combined with economic pressures and gentrification (Balk 2014). By 2015, one-fifth of households in Capitol Hill had incomes greater than $100,000 per year (Romano 2015b). Rising rents and costs of living make the neighborhood inaccessible to many queer residents. A 2021 report published by Seattle and King County documented how 20% of LGBTQ+ people had incomes below $15,000, making Capitol Hill "untenable, if not impossible" to live in (Tordoff et al. 2021; Ishisaka 2023, para. 5). Seattle Times' interviews with Capitol Hill residents expounded upon these changing neighborhood dynamics.

Shelley Brothers, the owner of Seattle's only lesbian bar Wildrose, described homophobia and misogyny increasing along with gentrification of the neighborhood (Romano 2015b). The neighborhood's tapestry has also seen significant change, as "gleaming new apartment buildings," "posh eateries," "big dance clubs," and "craft cocktail lounges have replaced quaint auto-row buildings and inexpensive restaurants" (Romano 2015b, para. 6).

Gentrification of queer neighborhoods is not unique to Seattle. Research conducted in Atlanta and San Francisco document similar changes and threats posed to queer communities. In Atlanta, gentrification has caused the "gradual demise" of neighborhoods such as Midtown, known in the 1990s as the "heart of the gay community in Atlanta" (Doan & Higgins 2011, 10, 12). The influx of heterosexual residents and heteronormative values led to a "decreasing tolerance for LGBT people and businesses" and an "increase in constraints to overtly queer behavior" (Doan & Higgins 2011, 15). Residents interviewed in the Atlanta study described limits to queer behavior and tolerance. One interviewee stated that transgender prostitutes used to be "part of the local color" but were now "a reason to call 911" in gentrified neighborhoods (Doan and Higgins 2011, 16). Another described how a man who brought his toddler to a Pride parade wrote a "nasty letter to the [neighborhood] association" after seeing "fetish floats and the hooting and hollering that go along with them" (Doan & Higgins 2011, 15).

Similarly, San Francisco's Polk neighborhood "fell victim to gentrification… displaced by cosmopolitan nightlife for heterosexuals" (Mattson 2015, 3151). In the 1990s, Polk was home to 12 gay bars that hosted "an array of LGBT subcultures rarely found elsewhere in San Francisco" (Mattson 2015, 3150). However, half of Polk's prominent bars were closed by 2004, and entirely gone by 2012 (Mattson 2014, 3151). In 2010, Polk had the most dance bars for heterosexuals, marking a drastic change from its formerly queer character (Mattson 2014, 3151).

All together, the neighborhood shifts demonstrated in Seattle, Atlanta, and San Francisco highlight ways in which gentrification erodes queer neighborhoods and the safety, belonging, and community they afford. Gentrification displaces lower-income queer residents, and leads to an imposition of restrictive OWW norms on queer bodies and behaviors. As queer neighborhoods face threats of gentrification, the protection of queer spaces such as DB Park becomes even more significant.

### THREAT OF EXCLUSION

While queerphobic legislation and economic pressures can threaten queer belonging from without, exclusionary practices threaten queer spaces from within. Exclusion arises through "homonormativity," or "sexual discretion, mainstream political assimilation and boutique consumerism" (Mattson 2015, 3144). Homonormativity can be understood as the normalization and prioritization of White, cisgender, upper-middle class, male power structures in queer spaces driven by economic interests of queers with privileged intersectional identities (Knee 2018, 500). By aligning to "acceptability" standards of the OWW/ heterosexual world, homonormative queers can financially benefit from increased property values and business revenue arising from gentrified queer neighborhoods. However, only queers who present and behave in alignment with OWW values can reap the benefits. Homonormative queer neighborhoods therefore exclude queer people who are "gender nonconforming, of lower socioeconomic status, and racial minorities," as they are not in alignment with the queerphobic, elitist, and racist values upheld by the OWW (Knee 2018, 500).

These exclusionary practices were exemplified in a study on Boystown, a prominent queer neighborhood in Chicago. Located within a predominantly White neighborhood, Boystown is "characterized by white gay male norms" and has become "based on normative, heterosexual respectability" (Knee 2018, 499-500). Boystown also has two community centers that offer social services to homeless residents, making the neighborhood significant for homeless queer individuals (Knee 2018, 500). However, homonormative residents sought to "exclude homeless LGBTQ individuals of color from being fully included in its public leisure spaces" (Knee 2018, 500). In a 2018 study, homeless interviewees described the conflicting forms of inclusion and exclusion faced in this queer space. Although "they can openly express their sexual identity," respectability politics, policing, and exclusionary nonprofit practices stigmatize and harm homeless queer people of color (Knee 2018, 500, 505). Boystown demonstrates the exclusive practices present in homonormative spaces labeled as "queer." Therefore, having truly queer spaces that embrace and emplace belonging for queer people with intersectional marginalized identities is crucial.



Looking at DB Park, a space enjoyed by BIPOC and homeless parkgoers, care must be taken to ensure the space is safe for these parkgoers to enjoy. Having the freedom and dignity to recreate as one pleases is a right granted to those privileged in the OWW: those who are White, male, straight (or gay, so long as you are "respectable"), cisgender, and wealthy. This freedom and dignity should be the standard for all in the queer community.

In summary, queer spaces matter because they are instrumental in the mental, physical, social, economic, and political health and well-being of queer people. They are important because they are few and far between, and those that exist are under threat of gentrification or heteronormative assimilation. Last, they are crucial because they have the potential to be fully inclusive spaces of belonging across identities of sexuality, gender, race, socioeconomic status, ability level, and beyond. This prior research underscores the significance DB Park holds to queer community members as one of the only queer and nudist recreation spaces in Seattle.

## WHY DOES QUEERING DESIGN MATTER?

Conventional design practices have upheld OWW norms and contributed to our world's rapid trajectory toward environmental disaster. The harms wrought by OWW design practices include - but are not limited to - the enforcement of gender and human/nature binaries, limits to accessibility and preference for ableness, and ignorance of community insight and expertise. Examples of OWW harms within and beyond DB Park are shown in **Figure 2.3**. To right the injustices created by OWW design, a queering of design is needed. **Figure 2.4** demonstrates the qualities of queer design that can offer solutions to the oppression of OWW design. Based on the values described above, queer design recognizes multiplicity of life, relationality between humans and more-than-humans, and importance of collective community-driven action. Queering design ultimately aims to create more just futures by recognizing a love and respect for all lives and ways of being. By juxtaposing conventional design practices with queer design practices, a better understanding of the importance of queering design can be obtained.

### Multiplicity through Queer Ecologies

The OWW has long upheld sexual and gender binaries while ignoring or attacking those with diverse identities. Queerphobic attitudes are rooted in Euro-western scientific standards of biology and ecology, and enacted through designed spaces such as restrooms. These binaries apply to both humans and more-than-humans.

In the study of ecology, Euro-western societies have understood "heterosexual reproduction [as] the only form of sexual activity leading directly to the continuation of a species… thus, logically, other sexual activities may turn out to be aberrant" (Mortimer-Sandilands & Erickson 2010, 10). Sex was only understood as a means of reproduction. As a result, "nonreproductive sexual behavior" was seen as a threat or supplement to heterosexual reproduction (Mortimer-Sandilands & Erickson 2010, 10; Terry 1999, 154). Since queer sex can be non-reproductive, people with these sexual identities are viewed as deviant. These OWW definitions conceptualize queer sexuality as "unnatural," and lack understanding of sex as pleasurable and desirable rather than purely reproductive (Mortimer-Sandilands & Erickson 2010, 10).

OWW proclamations of queerness as "unnatural" and gender/sexual binaries as the "acceptable" norm are upheld by conventional design. For example, restroom designs have facilitated the regulation and imposition of gender binaries on queer individuals. In constructing "men's" and "women's" restrooms, designers create spaces that are the "primary sites where non-conforming bodies are subjected to surveillance, gender policing, and violence" (Canli 2017, 270). This deliberately designed division has high-risk legal consequences for queer and TGNB individuals. In 2026, Idaho passed a law that "criminalizes transgender people using bathrooms that align with their gender identity," with first offenses leading to a misdemeanor charge, and a second offense within five years punishable by a felony and up to five years in prison (Pfannenstiel 2026, para. 1). Restroom designs based on OWW conceptions of gender have opened the door to surveillance and policing of queer and TGNB bodies, demonstrating harms wrought by conventional design practices.

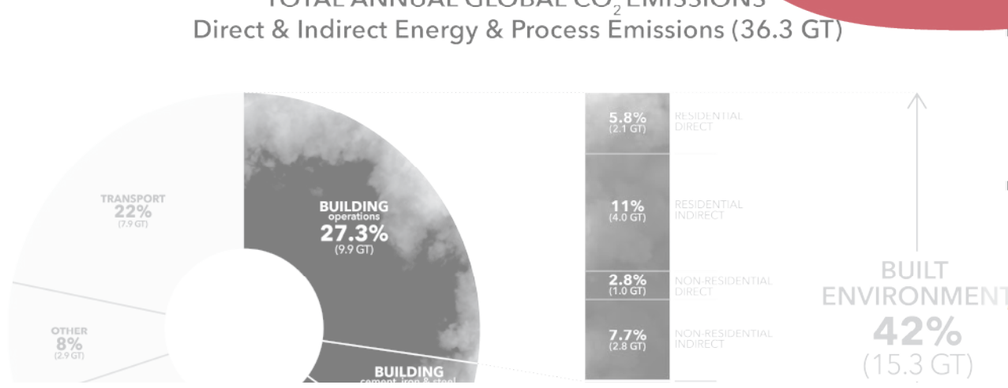
Contrary to OWW beliefs, however, queerness across sex and gender is entirely natural. For example, Indigenous communities in North America have

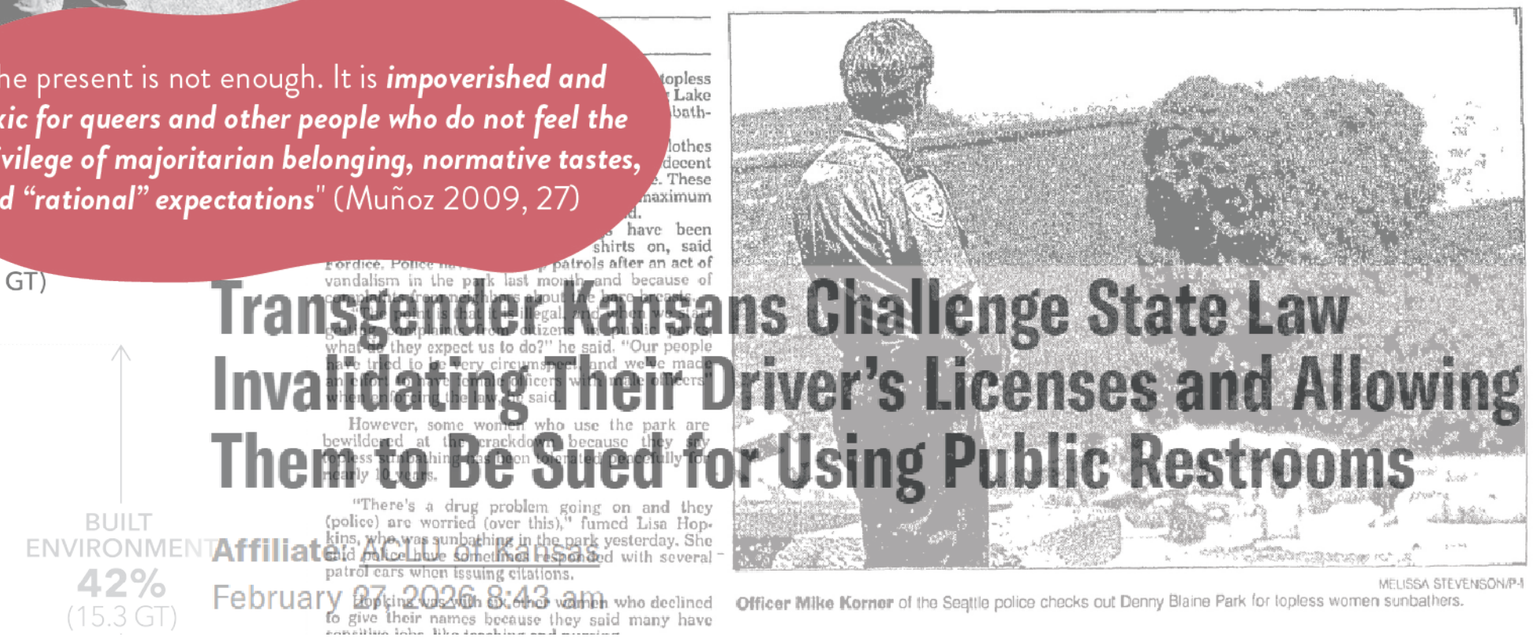




| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | | strategy but I am committed to figuring this out. I am assuming you are frustrated and I think your frustration is very reasonable. I know you want results and not an apology so I hope the later is quickly forthcoming |
| 6/2/2023 13:17 | Incoming | Mayor Bruce,<br>I very much appreciate your message, thank you.<br>I am expecting to hear from Adiam today re: her desire to meet with me next Thursday in person on what she feels are short as well as long term solutions.<br>With the continued bizarre behavior and progressively getting worse, that fundamentally, enforced rules MUST be established and enforced. What is happening because there aren't enforced rules, Denny Blaine Park is an attraction for a sub-group of people from all over, not just Seattle, that have very different morals than most of the people in Seattle, you and me included. So, that sub-group are absolutely keeping the clear majority of Seattleites away from Denny Blaine Park.<br>Again, thank you and in hope that results will be sooner rather than later. |

"The present is not enough. It is ***impoverished and toxic for queers and other people who do not feel the privilege of majoritarian belonging, normative tastes, and "rational" expectations***" (Muñoz 2009, 27)



# Police ticket topless sunbathers in park

# Transgender Kansans Challenge State Law Invalidating Their Driver's Licenses and Allowing Them to Be Sued for Using Public Restrooms

Affiliate ACLU of Kansas

February 07, 2026 8:43 am

MELISSA STEVENSON/P-I

**Officer Mike Korner** of the Seattle police checks out Denny Blaine Park for topless women sunbathers.

traditionally respected Two-Spirit people as "male, female, and sometimes intersexed individuals who combined activities of both men and women with traits unique to their status," and are considered an alternative gender status (Indian Health Service n.d., para. 2). Two-Spirit is a modern term, and many Indigenous communities have their own specific terms for "gender-variant members" (Indian Health Service n.d., para. 7). Adiantum pedatum or Maidenhair fern is a gametophyte that can have male, female, or hermaphroditic sexual characteristics (Alice Austen House n.d.-c). In a 2019 article from the scientific journal *Nature Ecology & Evolution*, researchers more broadly documented how over 1,500 animal species engage in same-sex sexual behavior including domestic cattle, variegated sea urchin, common toads, and Laysan albatross, to name a few (Monk et al. 2019, 1622). While these examples are but a fraction of the queerness found in nature - with a deliberate inclusion of humans in the definition of "nature" - they begin to show the breadth of gender and sexual diversity found in our many worlds. For humans, recognizing the queerness of the worlds around us offers evidence, community, and connection between ourselves and other beings. Learning of queerness' presence throughout the natural world also reveals the ignorant and unscientific nature of cisgender and heterosexual "normalcy" presented by the OWW as fact. Humans are not exempt from the queerness around us. The worlds, like ourselves, are queer.

Clearly, a queering of design is required to create spaces that reflect rather than restrict diverse sexual and gender identities. Instead of upholding harmful binaries,

**Figure 2.3:** Current OWW Crises. A compilation of current OWW crises within and beyond DB Park. Included are surveillance and overpolicing of queer bodies at DB Park from the 1980s to present day (Barber 1988, 14; McCall 2025c; Baich 2025), text conversations between neighbor Stuart Sloan and former Mayor Bruce Harrell ("Private Text Messages" 2023), legislation revoking rights for transgender people and communities ("Transgender Kansas Challenge State" 2026), and unsustainable practices of the built environments ("Architecture 2030" n.d.).

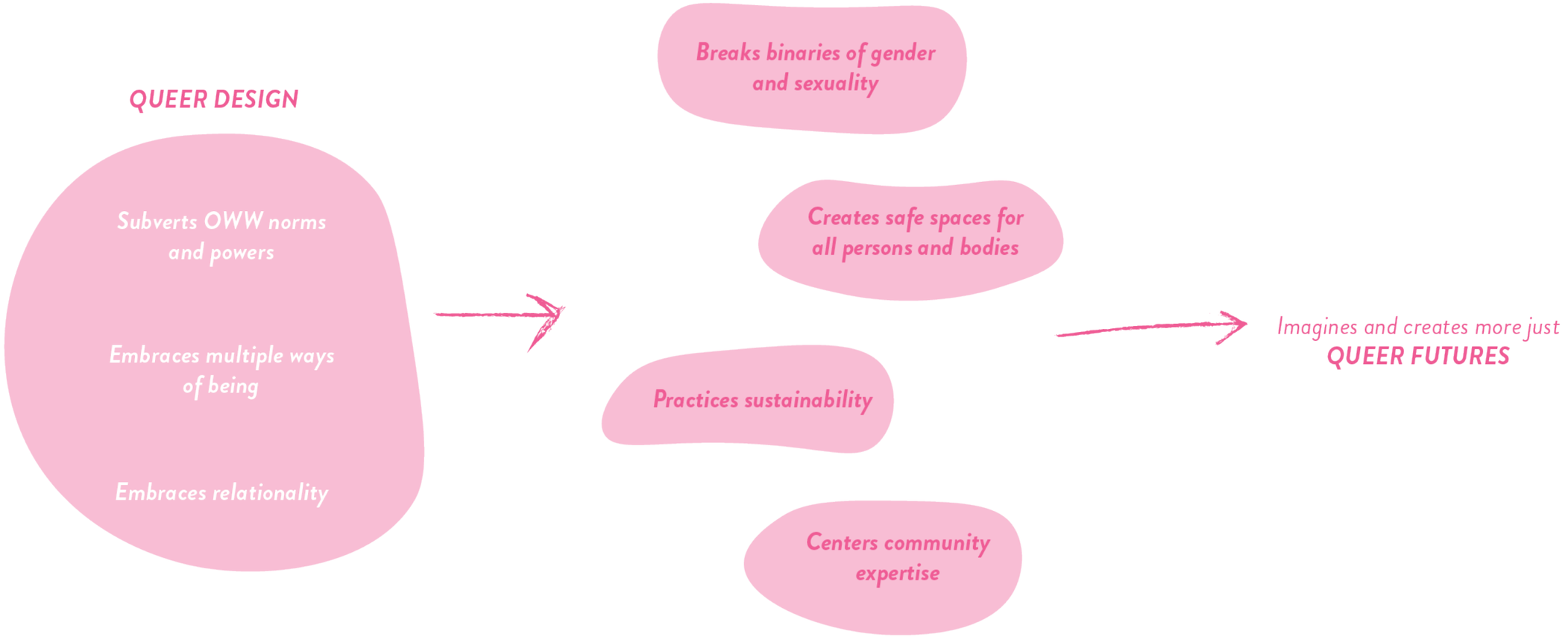



**Figure 2.4:** Queer Design for Queer Futures. Queer design offers solutions to the current OWW crisis.

design can embrace queer multiplicity. Methods of queering design will be described further in Chapter 4, where "Queer Ecologies Project" explores how planting can embrace queer multiplicity of the natural world.

## Multiplicity Through Universal Design

In alignment with OWW values, conventional design approaches have been "standardized" to accommodate "straight, white, healthy, tall" men (Kimmelman 2020, para. 13). In this limited world view, people with diverse ways of being must conform to these standards, or face exclusion from OWW spaces. In terms of the built environments, OWW design has led to the construction of a limited landscape with particular constraints for people with disabilities. "Persons with disabilities" has been defined by the United Nations as "those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others" ("United Nations Conventions" 2007, para. 29). However, disability rights scholars have advocated for "a shift from the medical model of disability, which locates disability within individual 'dysfunctional' bodies, toward the social-relational model: that is, an analysis of how disability is constructed by culture, institutions, and the built environment, which are all organized in ways that privilege some bodies and minds over others" (Costanza-Chock 2020, 93). Rather than disabilities being focused on individual bodies, this latter definition focuses on the responsibilities and shortcomings within the built environment that cause "barriers" to full participation.

Examples of institutional barriers include architectural design elements such as poor surface materials, limited seating options, no accessible toilets, limited wayfinding, limited width of pathways, loud or unpredictable noise levels, and poor lighting (Blaszcyk et al. 2020; Slocombe n.d.). In response to inequities in the built environments and beyond, disability activists held the

"Capitol Crawl" in 1990 to advance the Americans with Disabilities Act (PBS 2025). While ADA standards have led to significant gains for people with disabilities, they are not enough to fully embrace multiplicity in the public realm. For instance, a newly developed $41.5 million library in N.Y. was built in compliance with ADA standards, and hailed by able-bodied reviewers for its "architectural ambition" (Kimmelman 2020, para. 5). However, disability rights advocates justly criticized ways the design made areas inaccessible to people in wheelchairs (Kimmelman 2020). While ADA requirements are a step ahead of conventionally ableist design practices, a queering of design is required to create spaces that fully and beautifully embrace users of diverse ability levels. Inclusive designs should not be treated as a box to check, or feature to tack onto the end of a design (Kimmelman 2020). Rather, queer designs that create a sense of belonging for a multiplicity of users will have accessibility considerations woven into the concept since its inception. Such queering of design will work to create more just futures and equitable public realms.

Today, the concept of "Universal Design" moves beyond ADA requirements in advancement of more inclusive design practices. Universal Design is defined as "the design and composition of an environment so that it can be accessed, understood and used to the greatest extent possible by all people regardless of their age, size, ability or disability" (Centre for Excellence n.d.-a, para. 1). According to the Centre for Excellence in Universal Design, the goal is to create environments that can benefit a range of people, from those who have "no significant problems [using an environment]" to those who are "unable to use the [environment] at all" (Centre for Excellence n.d.-b, para. 3). Universal Design has seven core principles, listed verbatim below (Centre for Excellence n.d.-c, para. 2-8):

- Equitable Use: The design is useful and marketable to people with diverse abilities
- Flexibility in Use: The design accommodates a wide range of individual preferences and abilities
- Simple and Intuitive Use: Use of the design is easy to understand, regardless of the user's experience, knowledge, language skills, or current concentration level
- Perceptible Information: The design communicates necessary information effectively to the user, regardless of ambient conditions or the user's sensory abilities
- Tolerance for Error: The design minimizes hazards and the adverse consequences of accidental or unintended actions
- Low Physical Effort: The design can be used efficiently and comfortably and with a minimum of fatigue
- Size and Space for Approach and Use: Appropriate size and space is provided for approach, reach, manipulation, and use regardless of user's body size, posture, or mobility

These principles aim to create equitable spaces for users of various identities. However, critics of Universal Design contest designing for "everyone" in all designs. Instead, they argue that design is still justified if it only benefits marginalized people, or specifically people with disabilities (Persaud & Hamraie 2018). Therefore, while I argue Universal Design can greatly inform a queering of design practice, attention must be paid to ensure that people with marginalized identities are equitably included in the built environment. While ADA guidelines and Universal Design principles can be helpful references, the ultimate ambition of a queer design is to support a multiplicity of users and create just futures. Design precedents "Stalled!" and "Lincoln City Beaches" explored in Chapter 4 provide examples of a queer multiplicity and accessibility.

## Multiplicity Through Community Driven Design

As described above, conventional design processes often ignore multiplicity and exclude those who don't fit into OWW standards. Such exclusion is perpetuated by top-down, "expert-led" conventional design approaches. Design has been "pervaded by expert knowledge" that has stifled local expertise "generated by communities from within" (Escobar 2018, 32). Top-down strategies devised by "global experts, bureaucrats, and geoengineers" to solve our various social, political, and ecological crises generate "business-as-usual approaches that emerge from impoverished liberal mind-sets" (Escobar 2018, 40). Therefore, queer methods necessitate community-driven design solutions.

Queered design solutions are explored by author Sosha Costanza-Chock in her book "Design Justice: Community-Led Practices to Build the Worlds We Need." Costanza-Chock, an advocate for design justice who is a nonbinary trans femme, describes crucial lessons for design learned from disability activists (Costanza-Chock n.d.). According to Costanza-Chock, "involving members of the community that is most directly affected by a design process is crucial, both because justice demands it and also because the tacit and experiential knowledge of community members is sure to produce ideas, approaches, and innovations that a nonmember of the community would be extremely unlikely to come up with" (Costanza-Chock 2020, 94). In other words, everyone is a designer and expert of their own experience. Individuals know ways to devise solutions that OWW "experts" may not recognize due to differences in lived experiences. By recognizing that everyone holds unique knowledge, and respecting the multitude expertise in design processes, community-driven design honors queer multiplicity.

Community-driven design may best be encapsulated in a phrase popularized in the 1980s and 1990s by disability rights activists: "Nothing about us without us" (Costanza-Chock 2020, 93; Charlton 1998, 3). For just and queer design, work should be led by "communities most targeted by intersectional structural inequality" (Costanza-Chock 2020, 85).

Costanza-Chock illuminates these concepts through a hypothetical project focused on gentrification (Costanza-Chock 2020, 92). On the one hand, a conventional design process may include perspectives from a breadth of stakeholders including long-time residents facing displacement, wealthier residents seeking housing, landlords, developers, and planners (Costanza-Chock 2020, 92). Conversely, a queer "design justice project might engage with all these kinds of actors… but then work closely with, and under the leadership of, organizations that represent those most directly harmed by gentrification" (Costanza-Chock 2020, 92).

This example has direct implications for DB Park. In reimagining DB Park to support queer belonging, meaningful collaboration should be sought between designers and those most directly harmed by OWW design practices. For DB Park, this would include 2SLGBTQIA+ community members, particularly parkgoers who are disabled, TGNB, BIPOC, and/or unhoused, as OWW spaces historically excluded or targeted people with these intersectional identities. Community co-design was a central queer method of this thesis, and is discussed in further detail in Chapter 5.

## Collectivism Through Material Reuse

Another false binary created by the OWW is the dichotomy between humans versus nature. According to author Arturo Escobar, patriarchy and capitalism have fueled the "destruction of nature" based on their drive for domination and search for "endless progress" (Escobar 2017, 10-11). Mycologist and author Patricia Ononiwu Kaishian elaborates by describing how human exceptionalism, or myth "that the human species is superior" has "alienated humans from nature" and "paved the way for the destruction of our companions" (Kaishian 2025, 17). This binary has led to a culture of extractivism and unsustainability that permeates design and the built environment. In believing humans are exceptional and superior, we feel at liberty to use, abuse, and destroy the worlds and beings around us in service to our ends. To the OWW designer, the materials of our trade - "the soil mixes, seeds, aggregates, boards, blocks, and nursery stock" - are falsely viewed in isolation and endless abundance (Hutton 2020, 3). Little thought is given to the landscapes from which these materials originate, the hidden conditions of laborers, or their intensive energy consumption (Hutton 2020, 4). In accordance with capitalist values, "everything is attainable for a price" - the cheaper, the better (Hutton 2020, 4).

The OWW obscures the true cost of these destructive attitudes, both to ourselves and the worlds around us. "At the scale of the planet, humans metabolize matter for construction and agriculture at a rate ten times that of global geological processes alone" (Hutton 2020, 8). Building and construction sectors account for 37% of global greenhouse gas emissions (UN Environment Programme 2023). Greenhouse gas emissions are a leading contributor to climate change, and accelerate feedback loops that further worsen our climate future (Oregon State University n.d.). Such feedback loops include wildfires and melting permafrost, where increased temperatures resulting from climate change leads to more fires or thawing permafrost, which in turns increases carbon dioxide and causes further warming (Oregon State University n.d.). These are among the many dire consequences of the OWW's human/nature binary and unsustainable practices.

Contrary to OWW beliefs, humans, materials, and more-than-humans are deeply interconnected. As defined in Chapter 1, queerness recognizes our worlds as collective. Life "takes place within a relational matrix"

(Escobar 2017, 12). Our well-being is reliant on that of our neighbors. Queering design requires us to recognize and appreciate that we are all a part of nature, and must be responsible stewards of our worlds.

While I am framing concepts of collectivism as components of queerness and queer design, understandings and lifeways of relationality have been practiced by Indigenous peoples for millennia. As defined by the Indigenous Climate Hub, a platform formed by First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples, Traditional Ecological Knowledge is a "cumulative body of knowledge, practices, and beliefs about the relationship between living beings and their environment" (Barberstock 2024, para. 2). Traditional Ecological Knowledge "recognizes the interconnectedness of all living things and emphasizes the importance of maintaining balance in nature" (Barberstock 2024, para. 3). Indigenous communities have applied such knowledge to develop strategies in response to challenges posed by climate change (Barberstock 2024). Strategies include water management and conservation techniques, and sustainable hunting and fishing practices (Barberstock 2024). In moving toward more just and sustainable futures, a queering of design must include collaboration between Indigenous and non-Indigenous design practitioners and climate experts, leading to a melding of skills, respectful incorporation of traditional knowledge, and joint innovation of new solutions to collectively address our climate crisis.

A queer design method that breaks human/nature binaries and strives toward sustainability is material reuse. Material reuse reduces embodied carbon emissions, or emissions generated by the "manufacture, transport and assembly of materials" ("Building Reuse" 2022, 1). In the field of architecture, building reuse can eliminate 50-75% of embodied emissions ("Building Reuse" 2022, 1). Material reuse also reinforces the heritage of a place by adapting materials unique, significant, and recognizable to a landscape and community (Landezine n.d.). Materials hold memory - memory of landscapes, people, elements, and uses. Reintroducing local materials honors their and the site's history, and reinforces a sense of place for those who utilize them. Through this process of queering, designers can break nature/human binaries by reducing our carbon impact on the worlds around us, and by recognizing the life and legacy of materials as we transform them for future use.



Taken together, I believe that queer design requires us to embrace multiplicity and collectivism by breaking gender/sexual binaries, implementing universal design practices, centering community-driven design, and prioritizing sustainability and material reuse. These queer methods, explored further in Chapter 4's precedent studies and Chapter 5's community engagement, are crucial in subverting OWW powers, emplacing belonging, and envisioning queer futures at DB Park.

# *Denny Blaine Park as Claimed and Contested Queer Space*

03



## DB PARK STAKEHOLDERS

Before delving into DB Park itself, it is important to provide context for the stakeholders involved that are relevant to its history and current uses. While there are countless people that have enjoyed, claimed, and shaped DB Park into the space it is today, this thesis will focus on five entities who I have identified as having significant influences on the park. These groups are briefly described below, and shown in **Figure 3.1**.

- Independent Parkgoers: Independent parkgoers are those who don't officially represent or speak for any of the groups below. Parkgoers include a combination of queer and cis/het, nudist and clothed individuals. These community members use and enjoy DB Park; many of them also have rallied together as protectors and stewards of the park.
- Friends of Denny-Blaine Park (FoDB): As described on FoDB's website, the group is a "volunteer-led group dedicated to preserving & celebrating the park's historic nude & queer character... Activated by a need to protect Denny Blaine, community members came together to form FoDB" ("Friends of Denny-Blaine Park" n.d.). Created in the wake of a playground proposed by neighbors in DB Park that failed after community outcry, FoDB continues to steward DB Park today (Hiruko 2024; Schulkin 2024). More recently, FoDB has entered as an intervening party in a lawsuit filed by "Denny Blaine Park for All" against the City of Seattle (CHS Staff 2026). FoDB additionally holds community events such as park cleaning days, plant swaps, and craft days in the park ("Friends of Denny-Blaine Park" n.d.).
- Denny Blaine Park for All: According to Denny Blaine for All's lawsuit, the group is an "unincorporated neighborhood association consisting of neighbors and friends of the Denny Blaine Park (the 'Park') who are harmed and concerned about the conditions at the Park" ("Denny Blaine Park for All" 2025, 1). The group is suing the City over concerns of alleged indecent exposure, drug use, and parking violations at the park ("Denny Blaine Park for All" 2025, 2). Stuart Sloan, discussed below, is a witness for Denny Blaine Park for All in the ongoing trial ("Denny Blaine Park for All" 2026, 3).

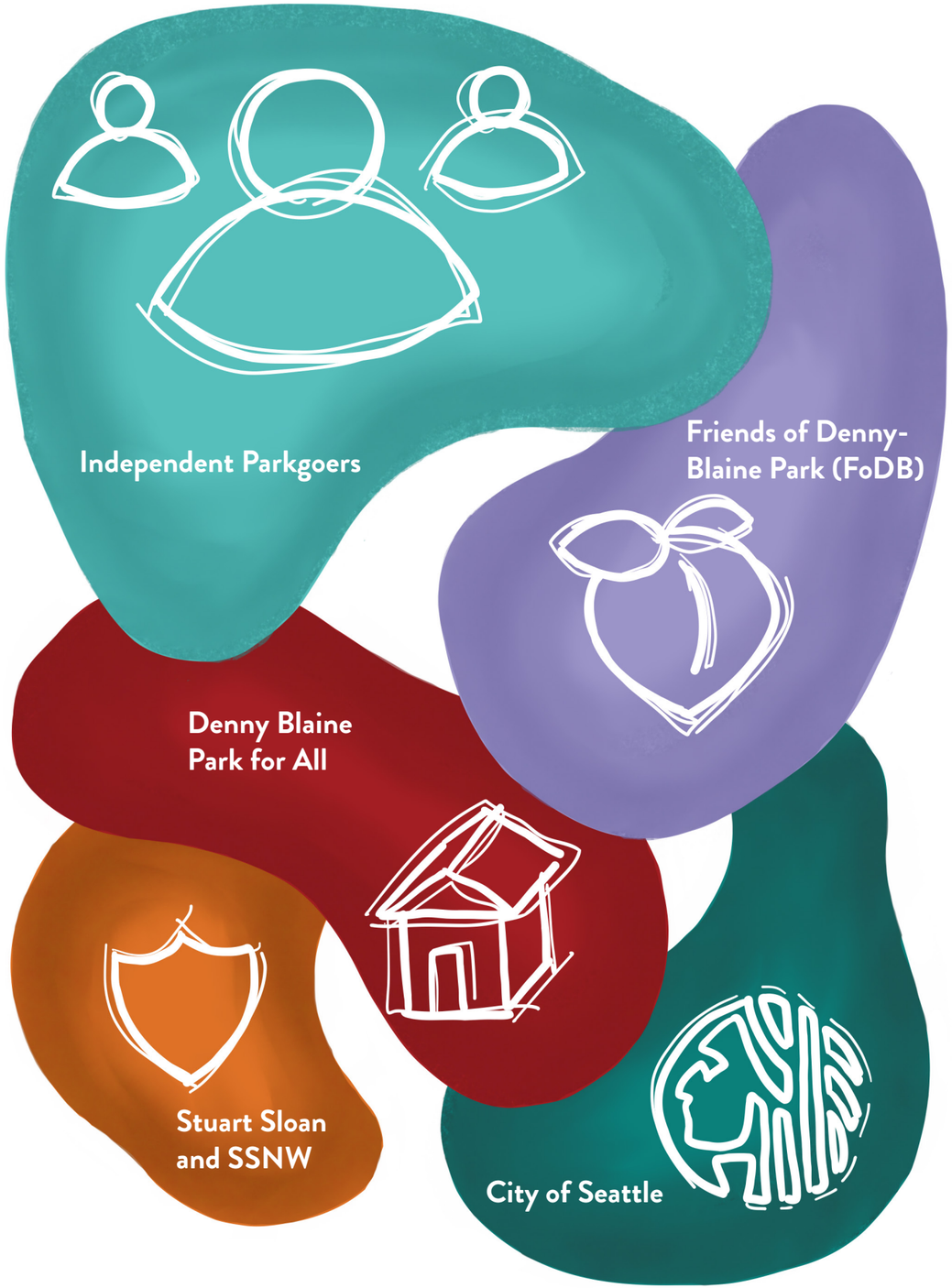



**Figure 3.1:** DB Park Stakeholders. Five stakeholder groups have been identified as having significant impacts on DB Park. Images are traced from City of Seattle seal ("City of Seattle Official Website" n.d.), and FoDB logo ("Friends of Denny-Blaine Park" n.d.).






**Figure 3.2:** DB Park Context. Aerial view and site photos of the upper loop and three tiers at DB Park. Aerial Image Source: "Google Earth", July 2024.

- Stuart Sloan and Security Services Northwest, Inc.: Stuart Sloan is a neighbor to DB Park ("Denny Blaine Park for All" 2026, 1). Sloan offered to privately fund the development of a playground on the site, a proposal that failed after organized resistance from parkgoers who enjoy DB Park's queer and nudist culture (Hiruko, 2024b; McCall, 2024; Beekman, 2023a; Beekman, 2023b). Sloan also has hired private security guards through Security Services Northwest, Inc. (SSNW) ("Denny Blaine Park for All" 2026, 1). In a court motion filed by FoDB, FoDB states SSNW "has monitored the Park and neighboring property 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year" since April 2025 ("Denny Blaine Park for All" 2026, 5). According to the motion, "Counsel for Plaintiff instructed SSNW: 'Please make sure your people at the Park make a record of all damage done to the new fence and new signs, any graffiti, and all nudity outside of the new fenced area'" (Denny Blaine Park for All" 2026, 5). The motion describes SSNW as surveilling the park, taking photographs of

parkgoers, and calling SPD on parkgoers perceived as breaking laws or park rules (“Denny Blaine Park for All” 2026, 5).

- The City of Seattle: DB Park was dedicated to the City of Seattle in 1901, and now falls in the jurisdiction of the Parks and Recreation department (“Denny Blaine Park for All” 2025, 2). The city is being sued by Denny Blaine Park for All over allegations that it “is refusing to even comply with its own Code of Conduct for parks which prohibits nudity, not to mention sexual acts” (“Denny Blaine Park for All” 2025, 2). The city countered claims by stating it has “taken action to address problems,” that it allows nudity in the Park, and that it enforces public indecency laws (“Denny Blaine Park for All” 2025, 3). The city states it recognizes the Park’s significance to the LGBTQIA+ community and “is trying to maintain a community space” at DB Park (“Denny Blaine Park for All” 2025, 3). However, queer and nudist parkgoers have voiced concerns with surveillance and enforcement at the park by police from the 1980s to present (Dirzhud-Rashid 1988, 14; McCall 2025c; McCall 2025d).

## CURRENT CONTEXT OF DB PARK

DB Park is located in the south-eastern section of the Denny Blaine neighborhood in Seattle. The eastern border of the park is Lake Washington. The park is bounded by private residential properties to the north and south. Currently, the site is comprised of three primary tiers: an upper grassy tier abutting a parking lot, a middle tier with grass, and a lower sandy beach tier. Across the parking lot and encircled by E Denny Blaine Place is an additional grassy area, referred to as “the upper loop” in this thesis. However, conversation with community members and limited observations at the park lead me to believe this space is less utilized by parkgoers compared to the three water-side tiers. The layout of the park can be seen in **Figure 3.2**.

## HISTORY OF DB PARK

### Indigenous History & Park Establishment

The timeline shown in **Figure 3.4-3.5** provides an overview of DB Park’s history. The lands upon which DB Park rests have been stewarded by the Duwamish peoples since time immemorial (“Seattle Neighborhoods: Denny-Blaine” n.d.). The Hah-Tshu-Ab’sh, or “Inside People,” were the first known humans to live in the region, and were hunters, gatherers, and fishers who cared for these lands for thousands of years (“Seattle Neighborhoods: Denny-Blaine” n.d.). DB Park, previously known as Whitman Place, and the adjacent land was purchased by Viretta Denny, Charles Denny, and Elbert Blaine to form the Denny-Blaine Lake Park subdivision in 1901 (“Seattle Neighborhoods: Denny-Blaine” n.d.). A trolley line to Madrona Park, intended to attract homebuyers to nearby real estate, was located adjacent to the Denny-Blaine Lake Park subdivision (Sherwood n.d., 1). The trolley drew business and interest in the area (Sherwood n.d., 1). As shown in plats from the early 1900s, Whitman Place/ DB Park included an esplanade along a seawall, a boat launch, a lagoon with a passage to Lake Washington, “a small rustic shelter, paths, lawn, and landscaping” (Sherwood n.d., 2). A plat from 1901 is shown in **Figure 3.3**. Charles and Viretta Denny would go on to dedicate ownership of the plats included in Denny-Blaine-Lake Park to the City of Seattle in June of 1901. In 1903, the Olmsted Brothers, prominent landscape architects, recommended incorporating DB Park into a larger park system for Seattle (“Denny Blaine Park” n.d.). DB Park was ultimately transferred to the jurisdiction of Seattle Parks and Recreation in 1932 (“Denny-Blaine-Lake Park” 1901; Sherwood n.d., 2).

Wealthy Seattle families, attracted to the lakeside properties, built homes in the subdivision, establishing a high level of affluence in the area that continues to the present day (Kimseylove 2025, 5; *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* 1904a). The OWW attitudes of settlers in the area are illuminated in *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* articles of the early 1900s. One reporter described the area as a “wild tangle of forest slopes” and “uncultivated wilderness” that had been replaced by “a score of handsome residences, beautiful lawns, and modern improvements” (*Seattle Post-Intelligencer* 1904a, 14). Such conceptions of these lands as “wild” and “uncultivated” prior to White homesteading and development dismissed and erased the millennia of



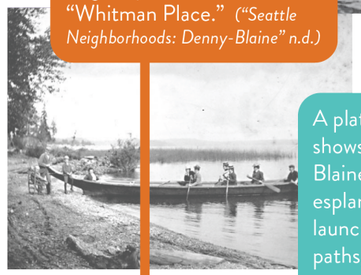

**Figure 3.3:** “Map of Denny-Blaine-Lake Park to the City of Seattle King County Wash.,” 1901. The map above shows a plat including DB Park (then called Whitman Place) from the early 1900s. Since this was before the Montlake Cut dropped the water level of Lake Washington by nine feet, the middle and lower tiers do not exist as they are below the current water level.

Indigenous presence, stewardship, and lifeways that existed and continue to thrive in Seattle today. This 1904 article highlights the prevailing colonialist and white supremacist OWW beliefs of the time, as Euro-Americans viewed landscapes as “pristine” and “empty of people” (Denevan 1992, 1).

Additional *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* articles of the era further reveal the desirability of Denny Blaine real estate. Properties in the Denny-Blaine neighborhood were listed in a 1906 article as “fit for a millionaire” (“For Sale - City Real Estate” 1906, 12). Numerous articles cited the extravagant social events frequently hosted in Denny-Blaine residents’ mansions, including a “luncheon” where “seventy-five guests” each had seats with a “bouquet of white roses... arranged in artistic grace” (*Seattle Post-Intelligencer* 1905, 10). Today, homes in Denny Blaine continue to sell at high values, with average prices over $2 million (Zillow 2025). Stuart Sloan’s home directly adjacent to DB Park has an estimated value of $21 million according to county records (Hiruko 2024b). As these documents demonstrate, the Denny Blaine neighborhood has been home to wealthy Seattleites since early White settlement of the area, a trend which continues today.

### DB Park as Contested Space

Non-normative uses of DB Park began to be documented in the following decades, perhaps precipitated by the creation of its sandy beach resulting from the Montlake Cut. In 1916, the Montlake Cut was constructed to connect Lake Washington and Lake Union to the Puget Sound (Ott 2012). When the waters were connected, the level of Lake Washington dropped 9’ to the height of Lake Union (Ott 2012). This change had drastic ecological, social and economic impacts including loss of the Black River, salmon runs, and lifeways for the nearly 300 Duwamish peoples who had lived in a village on the Black River for thousands of years (Ott 2012; Cleave 2017). For settlers, the Montlake Cut meant an economic boom, as resources such as logs and coal could be shipped from the inland to the Sound and beyond (Ott 2012). Another result (or consequence) of the lake level’s drop was a corresponding increase in shoreline. At DB Park, the lowering Lake Washington created a new beachfront for the park (Kimseylove 2025, 3; Sherwood n.d., 2). These changes in DB Park’s waterline before and after the Montlake Cut are shown in **Figure 3.6**.



(Denny, 1900)

**1901**
Elbert Blaine, Viretta Denny, and Charles Denny purchase Denny-Blaine Lake Park subdivision. The park is originally known as "Whitman Place." *("Seattle Neighborhoods: Denny-Blaine" n.d.)*

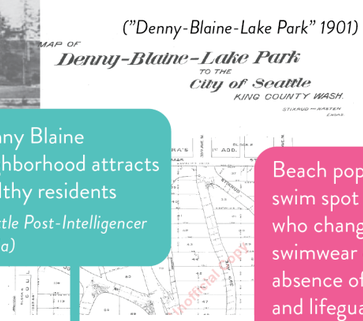
The lands upon which Denny Blaine Park sits have been stewarded by the "Inside People" or Hah-Tshu-Ab'sh since time immemorial. *("Seattle Neighborhoods: Denny-Blaine" n.d.)*



(Olmsted Associates, Inc. 1903)

A plat from the early 1900s shows Whitman Place/Denny Blaine Park featuring an esplanade along a seawall, a boat launch, a lagoon, a rustic shelter, paths, lawn, and landscaping *(Sherwood n.d., 2)*

**1903**
Olmsted Brothers recommend inclusion of Denny Blaine in larger park system *("Denny Blaine Park" n.d.)*




("Denny-Blaine-Lake Park" 1901)

Denny Blaine neighborhood attracts wealthy residents *(Seattle Post-Intelligencer 1904a)*

**1916**
Montlake Cut drops Lake Washington by 9', Denny Blaine beach is created *(Ott 2012; Sherwood n.d., 2)*

**1918**
Site renamed to Denny Blaine Park *(Sherwood n.d., 2)*

Beach popularizes as a swim spot for youth, who changed into swimwear openly due to absence of bathhouse and lifeguard *(Sherwood n.d., 2)*



(King 1985)

A nude awakening

The warmth of summer tempts sunbathers to bare all at local water spots

**1932**
Denny Blaine Park transferred to City jurisdiction *(Sherwood n.d., 2)*

**1933**
Ostrander neighbors hire gardener as policeman, who arrests Denny Blaine architect Ellsworth Storey. Storey complains to City in 1933 *(Rochester 2002, 63-64)*

Neighbors filed complaint including racist language to City about new park users, proposed signage restricting swimming that was rejected *(Rochester 2002, 64)*

**1952**
Neighbor complains to City about public bathing, lack of sanitary facilities, and trespassing. City maintains that park isn't a bathing beach *(MacQuarrie 2024)*

**1970s-1980s**
Women and lesbians sunbathe topless. Nickname "Dykekiki Beach" *(Romano 2015a; Rochester 2002)*

(Barber 1988)

Police ticket topless sunbathers in park

By Michael A. Barber
P-I Reporter

Seattle police have cited at least 16 topless women sunbathers at Denny Blaine Park along Lake Washington Boulevard, and some women, sunbathers and otherwise, are not happy about it.

"The tickets, issued since July 17 by plainclothes officers, have been for lewd conduct or indecent exposure, said police spokesman Don Perdue. These violations are misdemeanors that carry a maximum penalty of $5,000 and a year in jail, he said.

In addition, numerous warnings have been

Officer Mike Kerner of the Seattle police checks out Denny Blaine Park for topless women sunbathers.

**1982**
Cappy Kotz, a lesbian parkgoer, is arrested for sunbathing. Citations continue through the 1980s *(Brown 1982, 3)*

**1985**
Parkgoers call "Police! Police!" to signal when enforcement might becoming, marking some of the first documented instances of community solidarity and resistance against overpolicing in the park *(King 1985, D1)*

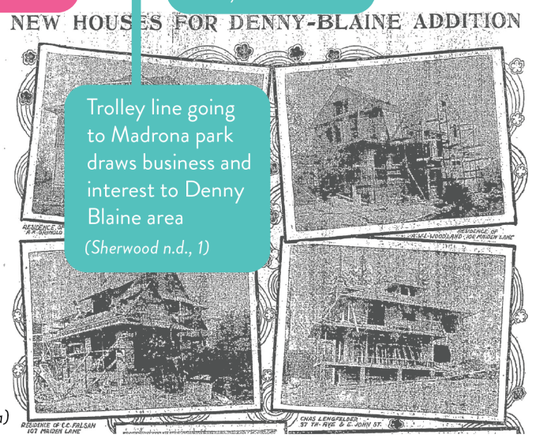
**1988**
Seventeen women are cited for lewd conduct. Lesbians continue vocalizing police harassment at the beach *(Dirzhud-Rashid 1988, 14)*

**1990**
Seattle v. Johnson eliminates lewd conduct ordinance. Being topless or naked is no longer illegal *(Court Strikes Down Law 1990)*

("Swim for Liberty" 1986)

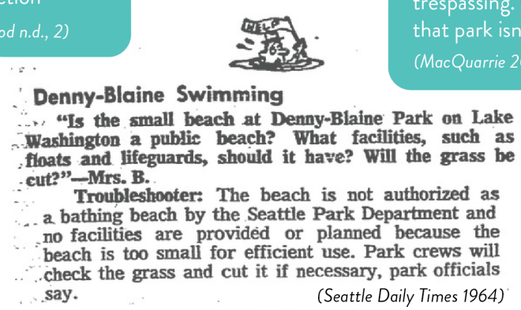



**1980s**
Several community events are held at Denny Blaine Park, including a "Swim for Liberty" to raise funds in advocacy of equal rights, a fundraising swim to raise money for people with AIDS, and a "soft muscle triathlon" where parkgoers gathered to picnic, swim, and enjoy the beach *(Hopkins 1986, D2; "Swim For Liberty" 1986, 72; Martin 1988, 15; Seattle Gay News 1985, 7)*




(Seattle Post-Intelligencer 1904a)

Trolley line going to Madrona park draws business and interest to Denny Blaine area *(Sherwood n.d., 1)*



Denny-Blaine Swimming

"Is the small beach at Denny-Blaine Park on Lake Washington a public beach? What facilities, such as floats and lifeguards, should it have? Will the grass be cut?"—Mrs. B.

Troubleshooter: The beach is not authorized as a bathing beach by the Seattle Park Department and no facilities are provided or planned because the beach is too small for efficient use. Park crews will check the grass and cut it if necessary, park officials say.

(Seattle Daily Times 1964)

**Figure 3.4:** DB Park Timeline Page 1. DB Park is a storied landscape. The park has long been enjoyed by parkgoers, swimmers, nudists, sunbathers, and queer community, and has been a contentious space amongst its users and local neighbors.

**2016**
Denny Blaine Park included in historic designations as a "Seattle Olmsted Park and Boulevard." Queer history not mentioned.
*(Beckner & Perrin 2016, 79)*

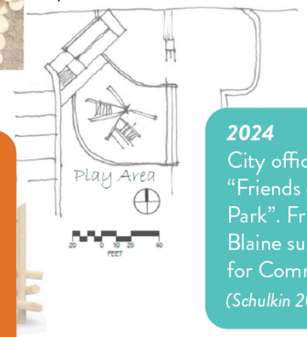
*("Private text messages" 2023, 2)*



**2022**
Neighbor Stuart Sloan met in person with Bruce Harrell to discuss concerns with parking, trash, and graffiti
*(McCall 2024)*



*("SPR Denny Blaine Park Proposed Play Area P12" 2023)*




**2023**
City proposes playground at Denny Blaine Park, funded by anonymous donor (Stuart Sloan and neighbors)
*(Beekman 2023b; Hiruko 2024b; McCall 2024)*

**2023**
Seattle Parks announces playground proposal will not move forward
*(Hirsch 2023)*

**2024**
City officially recognizes "Friends of Denny Blaine Park". Friends of Denny Blaine submit Denny Blaine for CommUnity Fund
*(Schulkin 2024)*

**2025**
"Denny Blaine for All" sues City, alleging public sex, indecent exposure, drug use, and parking violations
*("Denny Blaine Park for All" 2025, 2, 5)*

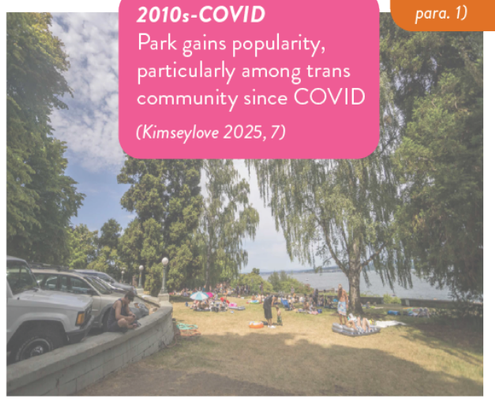
**2025**
Denny Blaine added to Washington State Heritage Register, with a focus on park's significance to queers and nudists
*(Kimseylove 2025)*

**2026**
Friends of Denny Blaine incorporates as nonprofit and joins lawsuit as intervening party
*(CHS Staff 2026)*

**2026**
Trial date is set for May 27, 2026
*("Friends of Denny-Blaine Park" n.d.)*

**2003**
Washington passes "Indecent Exposure" law
*(Washington State Legislature 2003)*

**2010s-COVID**
Park gains popularity, particularly among trans community since COVID
*(Kimseylove 2025, 7)*



*(TIA International Photography 2015)*

**2023**
Sloan texts Harrell to personal cellphone with grievances about Denny Blaine Park and "DISGUSTING" behavior
*("Private Text Messages" 2023, para. 1)*

**2023**
At a public meeting to discuss the playground, 400 community members attend and 8,500 sign a petition in opposition.
*(Beekman 2023a; Hiruko 2024b)*



*(Chiquiza and KUOW Photo 2023)*

**2024**
City holds a "listening session" with neighbors and parkgoers. Later, the City proposes splitting the park into clothing requested/optional areas. The proposal is rejected after another public meeting.
*(Zucco 2024; "Supplemental Use Management Guidelines" 2024; Girgis 2024; Schulkin 2024)*

**2024 - 2025**
Denny Blaine Park is chosen for CommUNITY Fund, allocating $400,000 to an improvement plan
*(Schulkin 2024; Engage Seattle Parks n.d.)*

**2025**
Judge allowed City to create abatement plan rather than close the park. Plan divides park into clothing required and optional areas with fence
*(KIRO 7 2025)*

**2025**
Nude puppet show and guerrilla performances advocate for bodily liberation against ongoing court case
*(AGPhoto 2025)*




*(Garland and CHS 2025)*

**2026**
Judge ruled abatement adequate to keep park open while lawsuit moves to trial in Spring
*(Carder 2025b)*

**Figure 3.5:** DB Park Timeline Page 2. DB Park is a storied landscape. In the 21st century, complex histories and tension have continued to arise between stakeholder groups including independent parkgoers, FoDB, Denny Blaine Park for All, Stuart Sloan, and the City of Seattle.



**Figure 3.6:** Photographs of DB Park Before and After the Montlake Cut. Before the Cut, water rose to the bulkhead (the current upper tier) of DB Park. After the Cut, the middle and lower beach tiers were exposed, creating more space for parkgoers to sunbathe on lawn or sand. Image source on left: Olmsted Associates, Inc. 1903.

In 1918, the park was renamed from Whitman Place to Denny-Blaine Park (Sherwood n.d., 2). The beach became a popular swim-spot for neighbors and boys who would change into swimming attire in the open because there was no bathhouse or lifeguard (Sherwood n.d., 2). However, neighbors objected to open-changing practices and park usage by perceived outsiders. During the 1930s, "nearby eminent families - a veritable 'who's who' of Old Seattle" filed a complaint with the Seattle Parks Board to suppress these non-normative activities and unwanted users (Rochester 2002, 64). Since the city reportedly didn't have budget for a lifeguard, neighbors proposed a sign restricting park usage that read (Rochester 2002, 64):

NO SWIMMING
OR PICNICKING
Park Dept.
Violators will be arrested
Madison Public Beach - 1 Mile
Madrona Public Beach - 1 Mile

In a follow-up letter to the City, neighbors additionally protested the "'swarming' over adjacent property" and presence of young people from "C**n Hollow who... come down there and change their clothes right in the open" (Rochester 2002, 64). According to Seattle historian Esther Mumford, this pejorative was formerly used by some to describe the Madison Valley area (Blecha 2019; Mumford 1993, 114). However, the Park Superintendent rejected both the proposed signage and restriction of public bathing at DB Park (Rochester 2002, 64).

These neighborhood complaints represent some of the first examples of threatened police presence and criminal repercussions for usage deemed deviant at DB Park. The usage of a slur also reflects a larger trend of racist attitudes and discriminatory practices pervasive within Seattle, as demonstrated by White individuals' and institutional usage of redlining practices, racial covenants, and housing restrictions during the 1900's (Honig 2021).

Perceptions of indecency continued to draw the ire of neighbors in the early 1900's. Local residents Harry and Lenore Ostrander organized their own security patrol for the area, hiring their gardener as a policeman (Rochester 2002, 63-64). The officer would go on to arrest famed Denny Blaine architect Ellsworth Storey for skinny-dipping (Sherwood n.d., 2; Rochester 2002, 64). Storey later complained in a 1933 letter to the Park Board about being ordered off the beach by the guard (Rochester 2002, 64). Building upon neighbor's earlier threats of policing for swimming or picnicking, these letters document the first arrest in the area regarding nudity. Such examples of restrictive signage, harmful language, surveillance, and overpolicing mark the beginning of a persisting conflict between neighbors, enforcement officers, and parkgoers at DB Park. Complaints of swimming and lack of oversight continued in the following decades. In June and August of 1952, another neighbor complained in a letter to Seattle Parks and Recreation about public bathing, lack of sanitary facilities, limited trash collection, and trespassing on property (MacQuarrie 2024). Internal discussion between the City's legal counsel and the Park's superintendent revealed a minimal-liability strategy, where the city rejected "operating [Denny Blaine Park] as a public bathing beach and maintain[ed] no facilities for [that]" (MacQuarrie 2024, para. 10). By withholding bathing facilities and designation, Parks aimed to avoid responsibility for damages and discourage swimming at DB Park (MacQuarrie 2024, para. 10). This avoidance did not deter parkgoers from using the beach, yet meant they had fewer amenities to enjoy it comfortably.

Neighbor's concerns over DB Park resurfaced in a 1964 section of the *Seattle Daily Times* called the "Times Troubleshooter." In the article, a reader asked if Denny Blaine was "a public beach? What facilities, such as floats and lifeguards, should it have? Will the grass be cut?" (*Seattle Daily Times* 1964, 15). Similarly to the letter from 1952, city officials replied that "the beach is not authorized as a bathing beach by the Seattle Park Department and no facilities are provided or planned" (*Seattle Daily Times* 1964, 15). Despite decades of usage as a swim spot and requests from neighbors, the City continued withholding amenities at DB Park.

## Gay Liberation and Park Queering

On June 28, 1969, the Stonewall rebellion fueled the U.S. gay liberation movement (WGBH Educational Foundation n.d.; Seattle Out & Proud n.d.). Stonewall would help "[ignite] a movement in Seattle" during the 1970s (Seattle Out & Proud n.d., para. 13). Numerous liberatory events occurred in this decade, including the formation of Seattle's Gay Liberation Front chapter, popularization of Capitol Hill as a gay neighborhood, repeal of state sodomy laws, banning of discrimination of sexual minorities, and first pride parade, to name a few (Seattle Out & Proud n.d.).

The visibility and acceleration of the gay rights movement in the 1970s provides context for DB Park's queer history. Documented queer usage of DB Park emerged in the 1970s and 1980s when women, particularly lesbians, started sunbathing topless (Kimseylove 2025, 6; Romano 2015a; Rochester 2002). As a result, the park was dubbed "Dykekiki Beach" (Romano 2015a; Rochester 2002). In retaliation to nudity, and permitted by a lewd conduct ordinance passed in 1973, police began citing and arresting parkgoers in full force (King 1985; Court Strikes Down Law 1990). Cappy Kotz was one of the first women to be found guilty of lewd conduct in 1982 for being topless at Denny Blaine Park (Brown 1982, 3). In a post-trial interview with the *Seattle Gay News*, Kotz remarked she was glad "her lesbianism was not brought up because she thought it would prejudice the jury against her," marking an acknowledgment of both queer presence at the beach, and the stigma surrounding queerness at the time (Brown 1982, 3).

Later in 1985, a *Seattle Times* article described a day in which "two dozen women" lay sunbathing topless at DB Park, with numerous other clothed parkgoers unbothered by the scene - "mothers still picnicked with babes. Kids tossed a ball back and forth. Men and women joked in animated groups" (King 1985, D1). This article additionally described that the beach was frequented by lesbians (King 1985, D1). The author's description of families being "unbothered" is notable, since narratives around nudity and/or queerness being inappropriate for children have historically plagued DB Park. Such ignorant and offensive attitudes are exemplified by Initiative 490, a 1986 Washington ballot measure aimed at prohibiting employment of "homosexuals and other 'sexually deviant' people in jobs involving contact with children" ("Gay-Basher Dobbs" 1986, 2). Fortunately, the measure failed to pass (Sullivan 1986). Still, this legislation highlights attempts of criminalization of queer people who interact with children (Sullivan 1986).

This *Seattle Times* article additionally stands as early documentation of amicable use of DB Park amongst a multiplicity of parkgoers - topless and clothed, lesbian and heterosexual. This shared use and respect stands in

stark contrast to views expressed by neighbors against swimming, nudity, or attendance of the park by perceived outsiders (Rochester 2002, 63-64; MacQuarrie 2024). While the *Times* article described "official and public reaction" about nudity to be "mixed," the reporter stated that "neighbors in the huge homes surrounding Denny Blaine are more restrained" (King 1985, D2). Although "nary a heart skipped a beat" amongst the "chatty crowd" of "mothers," "kids," and "men and women" in response to toplessness, some neighbors still held more restrictive standards of acceptability at DB Park (King 1985, D1). During this time at DB Park, nude bathers continued accusing police of harassment. Parkgoers were said to alert each other by calling "Police! Police!" to signal when enforcement was coming (King 1985, D1). These warnings amongst queer and nudist parkgoers indicate some of the first documented instances of community solidarity, vigilance, protection, and resistance against overpolicing and regulation within DB Park.

Police citations escalated further in the late 1980s. Between July and August of 1988, seventeen women were cited for lewd conduct, with lesbians continuing to vocalize police harassment at the beach (Dirzhud-Rashid 1988, 14). According to a *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* article, police increased enforcement after vandalism of a stone wall at the park upon which "men would commonly sit on the wall and ogle the partially nude women until someone smeared roofing tar across it" (Barber 1988, 14). Tarring the wall against "ogling" outsiders was a significant act of resistance and protection for parkgoers, many of whom held marginalized identities as women and/or lesbians. Ironically, police responded to this incident by overpolicing the parkgoers, rather than the "ogling" men who likely made the park feel unsafe or infringed upon. The article goes on to describe how local families additionally "complained that bare breasts made the park unseemly for children" (Barber 1988, 14). This pitting of nudity against "respectable" heteronormative family values continues to the present day. These concerns also seem to parallel the queerphobic language used in failed Initiative 490. For Initiative 490, queer or "sexually deviant" people were labeled as unsuitable to be near children. In these complaints, families deemed "bare breasts" to be unseemly for kids. Sentiments of queerness and/or nudity being inappropriate for children become pertinent in a playground proposal for DB Park, to be discussed shortly.

In defiance of overpolicing and attempted regulation by wealthy neighbors, parkgoers continued utilizing, organizing, and sunbathing nude at the park. In the 1980s and beyond, several LGBTQ+ community events were hosted in DB Park. One such event was the "Swim for Liberty," held to advocate for equal rights, send athletes to the SF Gay Games, and fundraise against Initiative 490 (Hopkins 1986, D2; "Swim For Liberty" 1986, 72). Another swimming event culminated at DB Park, where two members of the Orca Swim Club - currently the largest LGBTQ+ sports team in the Pacific Northwest - held a fundraiser for persons with AIDS (Orca Swim Team n.d.; Martin 1988, 15). One of the swimmers, Rene Oldrich, conceived of the event when a close friend died of AIDS (Martin 1988, 15). A third example demonstrates more casual usage of the space for the "First Annual Lesbian/Gay Soft Muscle Triathlon," where attendees were invited to walk, run, and float to DB Park on air mattresses and attend a post-race picnic (*Seattle Gay News* 1985, 7). These events illuminate DB Park as a space for queer joy, advocacy, and solidarity throughout the 1980s, a culture and necessity which continues today. News clippings for these events are shown in **Figure 3.7**.

## Nudity is Legalized in Seattle

By 1990, the lewd conduct ordinance was finally eliminated from Seattle legislation, thus legalizing nudity in DB Park and beyond (Kimseylove 2025, 7; "Court Strikes Down Law" 1990). In 2003, the Washington State Legislature passed the "Indecent Exposure" law that specified the bounds of acceptable nudity in the state (Washington State Legislature 2003, para. 1). The revised code states: "A person is guilty of indecent exposure if he or she intentionally makes any open and obscene exposure of his or her person or the person of another knowing that such conduct is likely to cause reasonable affront or alarm," with more serious charges if a person exposes themselves to someone under fourteen years of age (Washington State Legislature 2003, para. 1). However, what is deemed "reasonable" may differ between those with OWW expectations, versus those in conflict with the OWW. While nudity is legal in Seattle, the indecent exposure law presents a grey area that neighbors continue to utilize against nudist and/or queer individuals at DB Park.

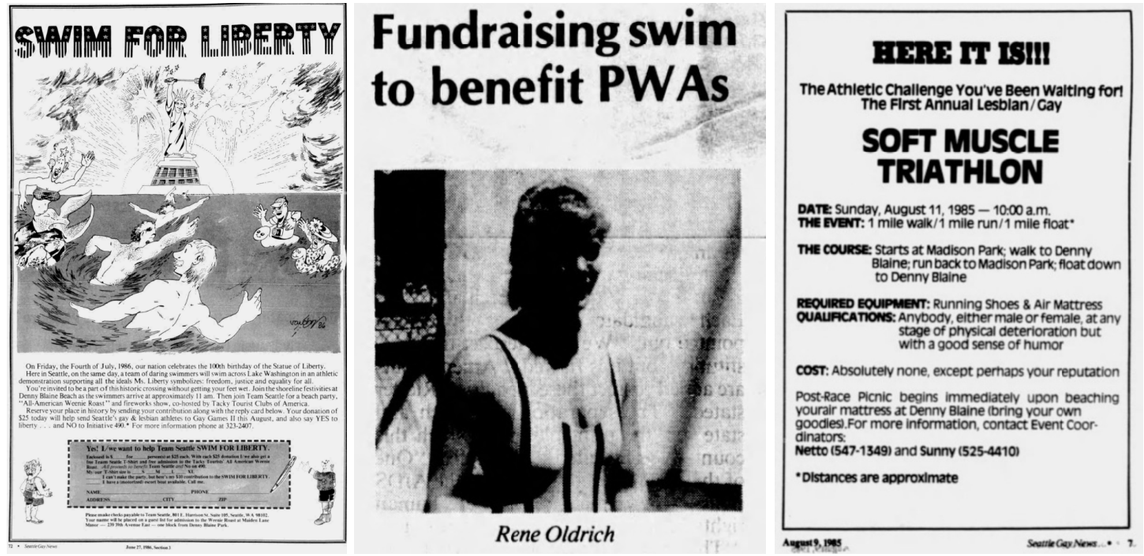



**Figure 3.7:** Queer Events at DB Park. The news clippings shown above provide examples of events and fundraisers held at DB Park during the 1980s. Queer community rallied to advocate for equal rights, raise funds against homophobic legislation, and support people with AIDS. Other events focused on queer leisure and community. Sources, left to right: "Swim For Liberty" 1986; Martin 1988; *Seattle Gay News* 1985

## Queerness & Conflict in the 21st Century

Queers and nudists have continued to enjoy and make claims to DB Park in the 21st century. Since the 2010s and the COVID pandemic, the park has become increasingly popular, and more frequented by transgender parkgoers (Kimseylove 2025, 7). However, the 2020s would also mark a significant turning point for DB Park as neighbors made more brazen attempts to undermine nudist usage of the space. In 2022, DB Park neighbor Stuart Sloan met in person with then-Mayor Bruce Harrell to discuss concerns with parking, trash, and graffiti at DB Park (McCall 2024). The following year, Sloan again aired his grievances to Harrell through texts to the mayor's personal cell phone (Hiruko 2024a). Messages included photos of parkgoers at DB Park that Sloan called "DISGUSTING" ("Private Text Messages" 2023, para. 1). Harrell affirmed Sloan's sentiment by stating "I share your disgust" at "the problem of nudity and hazardous waste" ("Private Text Messages" 2023, para. 10). Sloan goes on to describe parkgoers as exhibiting "bizarre behavior" and belonging to a "sub-group" that keep "the majority of Seattleites away from Denny Blaine Park" ("Private Text Messages" 2023, para. 11). Harrell replies with a plan to take "a more aggressive and immediate approach" at the park ("Text Messages between Mayor" 2023, para. 15). In separate communication with the Seattle Park's Superintendent, Harrell stated Sloan's issues with the park had "persisted for 6 to 7 years" (Hiruko 2024, para. 3). The mayor's office spokesperson also stated that Harrell was focused on curbing public masturbation, defecation, and lewd park activities, but respected "the right to be nude in public" (Hiruko 2024a, para. 17).

In November of 2023, news broke that the City of Seattle was planning to add a playground at DB Park (Beekman 2023b). Seattle Parks proposed the plan due to a perceived deficit of play areas within the area, noting an absence of playgrounds within a 10-15 minute walk (Beekman 2023). The design focused on adding a "minimalist" play structure to the top tier of DB Park (Friends of Denny-Blaine Park 2023). The playground project was being funded by an anonymous donor - later identified as Sloan - who offered to privately donate $550,000-$1 million toward its construction (Hiruko 2024b; McCall 2024). According to Lee Keller, a spokesperson for neighborhood group "Denny Blaine Park for All," several other residents were willing to

contribute funding (Hiruko 2024b). The playground proposal relied on private funding, since the City itself wasn't putting money towards a project located in a neighborhood that wasn't identified as a priority improvement area (Friends of Denny-Blaine Park 2023). Despite the close contact between Harrell and Sloan regarding DB Park, the mayor's office maintained that Harrell wasn't aware that Sloan was the donor (McCall 2024).

The proposal quickly drew attention and organized resistance from parkgoers, particularly queer and nudist users. Within a week, an online petition had collected 3,000 signatures against the park, with two City Council members additionally raising concerns against the plan (Beekman 2023b). On December 3, 2023, Seattle Park's hosted a public meeting to discuss the playground plan in which around 400 community members attended, dozens shared stories and opposition to the playground, and by which point 8,500 people had signed the online petition (Beekman 2023a; Hiruko 2024b). Parkgoers vehemently opposed the proposal, arguing a playground would undermine queer and nudist usage of DB Park. One transgender parkgoer described how a children's playground could fuel "vicious and hateful accusations toward the trans community" (Friends of Denny Blaine Park 2023, 15:00). Another trans woman argued the proposal was a "direct use of weaponizing children against the queer and trans community" (Friends of Denny Blaine Park 2023, 25:55). A parkgoer who is a Black transgender man summarized these sentiments by stating the "construction of the playground displaces my belonging, it displaces my dignity, and that of my community" (Friends of Denny Blaine Park 2023, 52:37). Several parkgoers emphasized how important DB Park is as a safe space for queer, trans, and nudist communities (Friends of Denny Blaine Park 2023).

The children's playground proposal marks a continuation of damaging ideology that has plagued queer people for decades. As demonstrated through failed Initiative 490 of the 1980s, queer people have historically been demonized as unsafe to be near children ("Gay-Basher Dobbs" 1986). Whether deliberate or not, the construction of a playground at DB Park could have incited further false, damaging accusations against queer - particularly TGNB - people. At its worst, the playground may have propelled accusations of "grooming" that have been hurled against queer people (Block 2022). As parkgoers argued, a playground could incite harmful rhetoric and displace queer and nudist communities that have enjoyed DB Park for decades.

Hearing the concerns raised by parkgoers, the City announced that the play area project would not move forward (Hirsch 2023). After the playground proposal failed, meetings continued to be held between parkgoers, Seattle Parks officials, and neighbors to resolve conflicts at DB Park. After a "listening session" in 2024, the City proposed splitting DB Park at the parking lot into clothing-requested and clothing-optional areas as shown in **Figure 3.8** (Zucco 2024; "Supplemental Use Management Guidelines" 2024). However, at a public meeting, parkgoers contested this zoning, and the proposal was dropped by the Parks department (Girgis 2024; Schulkin 2024). During this time, the City officially recognized "Friends of Denny-Blaine Park" (FoDB) as an advocacy and stewardship group for DB Park (Schulkin 2024).

During 2024, DB Park was also chosen as a Park CommUNITY fund recipient (Schulkin 2024). This funding allocates $400,000 toward park improvements including enhanced multimodal transportation access, improved accessibility, restroom feasibility studies, improved signage, and basic park upgrades like trash cans, seating, landscaping, and other infrastructure (Engage Seattle Parks n.d.). The project timeline anticipates site analysis occurring in Fall of 2025, planning in 2026, and design and permitting from 2026-2027 (Engage Seattle Parks n.d.). The CommUNITY Fund proposal was submitted by FoDB, and includes language recognizing DB Park's importance to the LGBTQ+ community and plans for community engagement (Schulkin 2024; Engage Seattle Parks n.d.). Through collaboration with community members, DB Park's improvement project holds promise to be in far greater alignment with parkgoers and queer community desires than the former playground proposal (Schulkin, 2024; Engage Seattle Parks n.d.).

Some DB Park neighbors remained aggrieved by issues surrounding the park. In April 2025, several neighborhood members of Denny Blaine Park for All sued the City over mismanagement of the park, alleging concerns of public sex, indecent exposure, drug use, and parking violations ("Denny Blaine Park for All" 2025, 2, 5; Carder 2025; Beekman & Kroman 2025, para. 3). The plaintiffs stated they had "hundreds" of






**Figure 3.8:** Initial Clothing-Required Proposal. An aerial photograph showing the City of Seattle's 2024 proposal to divide DB Park into clothing-requested and clothing-optional areas. This proposal was not enacted. Source: "Map of Denny Blaine Park" 2024, City of Seattle.

examples to support their case, collected since 2021 (Beekman & Kroman 2025, para. 6). They also argued that improvements such as accessibility handrails would worsen their plight, since they would "make the park more welcoming and thus increase pervasive violations" (Beekman & Kroman 2025, para. 17). These neighbors argued that closing the park was a fair price to pay "in order for the law to be upheld" (Beekman & Kroman 2025, para. 24).

Roughly a month after the lawsuit was filed, examples of surveillance and enforcement of nudity in DB Park persisted. On May 4 of 2025, three police officers told parkgoers that being naked was illegal, although nudity is legal in Seattle (McCall 2025c). One transgender woman was told she could not return to the beach for a week after she refused to put on clothes (McCall 2025c; McCall 2025d). At a neighborhood Q&A held later that week with Seattle Police Department Chief Shon Barnes, community advocates for DP Park contested the policing of nudity (McCall 2025d). Chief Barnes confirmed that nudity is "not illegal," and that the parkgoer was allowed back at DB Park (McCall 2025d, para. 15). The ongoing surveillance and enforcement of nude queer bodies at DB Park is a continuation of the citations against topless lesbians from the 1980s. Despite nudity now being legal in the city, queer people who are acting fully within their rights are still the targets of policing.

Later in May of 2025, another meeting was held that included Chief Barnes, a public safety officer, a City Council member, an executive director of the Lavender Rights Project, and representatives of FoDB (McCall 2025b). In this session, City officials agreed to dispatch park rangers rather than police for complaints of lewd behavior at DB Park, and agreed to work on a policing plan with FoDB (McCall 2025). Chief Barnes also voiced interest in signs identifying DB Park as clothing optional, which was an idea neighbors had rejected the year prior (McCall 2025b).

However, as a result of the lawsuit and to appease neighbors' concerns, the City created a temporary "abatement plan" in July 2025 (KIRO 7 2025). According to Seattle's Municipal Code, "abatement" is defined as "removal or elimination of an unauthorized use of park property, whether by physical removal or by legal action" (City of Seattle n.d.) The plan divided the park into clothing-optional and clothing-required

sections with a visual fence barrier, installed new signage with Park rules and laws, and increased park ranger presence and enforcement (KIRO 7 2025). The current DB clothing zones are identified in **Figure 3.9**.

Denny Blaine Park for All felt these measures were inadequate in addressing "ongoing illegal activity" (KIRO 7 2025, para. 12). Parkgoers also passionately rejected the proposal. In a remarkable show of "defiance, nudity… and puppets," queer and nudist community members organized guerrilla performances to protest the litigation and abatement plan (AGPhoto 2025). The shows centered on "radical satire, bodily liberation, and a middle finger to privatization," and were rife with commentary against Stuart Sloan, Bruce Harrell, and Charles Denny (AGPhoto 2025, para. 3).

As parkgoers rally to protect DB Park from OWW pressures seeking to stifle freedom of expression at the park, the court case marches onward. In October 2025, a judge ruled the abatement as "adequate" to keep the park open while the lawsuit moves toward a Spring 2026 trial (Carder 2025b, para. 1). On January 27, 2026, FoDB entered the lawsuit as an intervening party in order to represent the "interests and voices of LGBTQ+ beachgoers" (CHS Staff 2026, para. 4). On February 20, FoDB filed a motion to confirm that toplessness is allowed at DB Park (Friends of Denny-Blaine Park 2026). FoDB filed this motion in response to actions by Stuart Sloan's private security guards, who were demanding "that some parkgoers cover their torsos - while leaving others with equally bare torsos undisturbed" ("Denny Blaine Park for All" 2026, 5). In the motion, FoDB wrote that "the enforcement pattern [was] sex- and gender-discriminatory, with a particularly cruel impact for some transgender parkgoers" ("Denny Blaine Park for All" 2026, 5). A judge granted the motion on May 1, allowing parkgoers to be topless throughout all portions of the park (Friends of Denny-Blaine Park 2026).

While the motion was a victory for queer and nudist organizers, the trial date between Denny Blaine Park for All (plaintiff) versus the City of Seattle (defendant) and FoDB (intervenor) will be a tipping point in DB Park's history and future. The trial date is set for May 27, 2026 ("Friends of Denny-Blaine Park" n.d.). No further updates on the trial have been released at the time of this thesis' publication.

## PRESERVATION HISTORY

DB Park is listed both on the National Register for Historic Places (NRHP) and the Washington State Heritage Register, although for reasons of different significance. In 2016, "Seattle's Olmsted Parks and Boulevards" were added to the NRHP, with DB Park included among numerous others in the listing (Beckner & Perrin 2016). As the name implies, this nomination was focused on the Olmsted Brothers' influence as "[laying] the foundations" for Seattle's park system (Beckner & Perrin 2016, 4). DB Park itself is only mentioned as one of many "parks designed, influenced, or recommended by the Olmsted Brothers," with no inclusion of its specific history, context, or usage by queer or nudist users (Beckner & Perrin 2016, 79).

More recently on September 23, 2025, DB Park was unanimously added to Washington State's Heritage Register of historic places by the Washington State Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation (DAHP) ("Friends of Denny-Blaine Park" n.d.). Unlike the National nomination, this designation was entirely focused on the park's significance as a queer and nudist space. Under "Category of Property," the site was listed as both a "historic site" and "cultural landscape," with areas of influence including a property "directly connected to a movement […] which served as a focal point for a community or group," as "directly connected to specific activities or events which had a lasting impact on the community or region," and as having "strong artistic, architectural or engineering qualities, or displays unusual materials or craftwork belonging to a historic era" (Kimseylove 2025, 2). The form ends by describing DB Park as a space used by nudists and queers for over 50 years, and acting as "a reminder of diversity of lifestyles throughout the city of Seattle and the various efforts by these communities to protect their shared experiences and places of importance" (Kimseylove 2025, 8). The designation is recognized by FoDB as protecting the park from neighbor's efforts to prevent nudity, although there is no accompanying "administrative component" from the state to "oversee preservation and protection" of sites on its register (Carder 2025a, para. 3).






**Figure 3.9:** Current Abatement Plan. The City's abatement plan divides DB Park into clothing required (Area 1) and clothing optional (Area 2 and 3) spaces. A chain link fence located between the two areas is a physical and visual barrier. Source, upper left: KIRO 7 2025.

## CURRENT SITE CONDITIONS AND MANAGEMENT

The park currently remains open, but has been divided by the abatement plan into "clothing required" and "clothing optional" sections. The abatement plan's fence and visual screen sits between the upper and middle tiers (KIRO 7 News Staff 2025). Several cameras from homes to the north and south of Denny Blaine point into the park, and East Denny Blaine Place. Security guards hired by Stuart Sloan surveil parkgoers ("Denny Blaine Park for All" 2026, 1). During my visits to Denny Blaine Park during the Winter of 2025 to Spring of 2026, I had three conversations with one of Sloan's security guards. Since the security guard was not officially an interviewee, the content of these conversations is not included in this thesis due to considerations regarding consent for interviews.

According to online resources, parking additionally seems limited at the beach, with FoDB requesting parkgoers to not park in front of people's driveways, accompanied by a map of parking/no parking spots ("Friends of Denny-Blaine Park" n.d.).

The site is officially managed and maintained by Seattle Parks and Recreation. My conversations with parkgoers and accompanying research have illuminated ways in which individual users tend and steward the space. FoDB also acts to preserve the park, and organizes landscaping work parties ("Friends of Denny-Blaine Park" n.d.).

## HISTORY, BELONGING, AND THE IMPORTANCE OF QUEER SPACE

The history provided above highlights the importance of DB Park for queerness and queer belonging. As described, DB Park supports several elements of belonging: feeling safe, feeling one can show up as their full self, feeling included and celebrated, and feeling a sense of agency. Despite policing and pushback from neighbors, queers and nudists have felt safe enough to recreate at DB Park since the 1970s-1980s (Kimseylove 2025, 6; Romano 2015a; Rochester 2002, 63-64). As demonstrated through organized events in the 1980s, queer community members have felt they can show up, visibly and proudly, as their full selves (Hopkins 1986, D2; Martin 1988, 15; *Seattle*

*Gay News* 1995, 7). Inclusion is fostered through formal designation on the Washington State Register of Historic Places, where queer and nude history is officially celebrated in DB Park (Kimsleylove 2025, 2). Last, numerous examples of queer agency exist in DB Park's history, including queer events of the 1980s, protective calls of "Police!" documented in 1985, roofing-tar retaliation against "ogling outsiders" in 1988, organizing against the children's playground in 2023, protest against the ongoing litigation through queer-led guerrilla puppet shows in 2025, and legal intervention by FoDB in 2026 (Hopkins 1986, D2; Martin 1988, 15; *Seattle Gay News* 1995, 7; Barber 1988, 14; AGPhoto 2025; King 1985, D1; Beekman 2023a; Hiruko 2024b; CHS Staff 2026, para. 4).

DB Park's history and present culture also invites and celebrates qualities of queerness through non-normativity, multiplicity, and collectivism. DB Park has been claimed by a multitude of users, including those with diverse sexual and gender identities, and bodily expressions of nudity. Park usage by the 2SLGBTQIA+ and nudist communities subverts OWW standards present in the area, as demonstrated by repeated conflicts with neighbors and police since the early 1900s (Rochester 2002, 63-64; McCall 2025). However, parkgoers have acted collectively to protect this space against perceived threats.

DB Park's history exemplifies why this space is necessary and beloved by queer community. The park is a unique space of queer belonging in the city, with a legacy of leisure, resistance, and joy. The park supports the 2SLGBTQIA+ community and queerness more broadly, fulfilling and fostering many facets of belonging and queerness identified in Chapters 1 and 2. However, the current lawsuit and possibility of park closure threatens DB Park's culture and communities. In order to strengthen and emplace queerness and queer belonging in the space, this thesis aims to reimagine DB Park to honor its history and support its futures through queer design. What follows in Chapter 4 is an exploration of queer design through case studies, in order to learn ways in which community-based visions for DB Park can be implemented through a queer lens.

# *How can Design be Done Queerly?*

04



In reimagining ways to support queerness and queer belonging in space at DB Park, a key question arises: how can such design be "done queerly"? Looking at the works of other theorists, artists, designers, and queers offers guidance in answering this question. The precedents listed below have been divided into three broad categories: "Queered Design," "Queerly Designed," and "Queering Design." These categories and relevant precedents are represented geographically in **Figure 4.1**. "Queered Design" delves into histories and contexts of queer recreation spaces to compare similarities and differences between these landscapes and DB Park, as well as derive key takeaways from these spaces that could inform Denny Blaine's design. "Queerly Designed" examines projects made through a queer lens, to learn ways in which others have explored queer design practices as they may relate to DB Park. Last, "Queering Design" focuses on ways in which conventional design methods can uphold queer ethics and be applied to DB Park. The "Queered Design," "Queerly Designed," and "Queering Design" precedents will be applied to DB Park's reimagined designs (Chapter 5) to realize queer futures for DB Park (Chapter 6). Table 4.2 summarizes key takeaways for DB Park's redesign that arose from precedent studies.

For each precedent study, images were annotated with the following key:

- = Accessibility
- = Amenities
- = Signage
- = Enforcement
- = Landscaping
- = People & Programming




**Figure 4.1:** Map of Precedent Studies.

## Queered Design

***Landscapes claimed by queers.*** Explores other queer recreation spaces, drawing comparisons and takeaways for Denny Blaine Park.

1. ***Jacob Riis Park***, Queens, NY, USA
2. ***Hanlan's Point Beach,*** Toronto, ON, Canada

## Queerly Designed

***Projects made with intentionally queer lens.*** Examines projects made queerly to learn ways in which otheres have explored queer design practices.

3. ***Stalled!***, speculative (no location)
4. ***Queer Ecologies Project,*** Staten Island NY, USA
5. ***Cutting Out***, Seattle, WA, USA

## Queering Design

***Conventional methods with queer ethics.*** Focuses on ways in which conventional design methods can uphold queer principles and apply to Denny Blaine Park.

6. ***Dolly's Park***, Brooklyn, NY, USA
7. ***Lincoln City Beaches,*** Lincoln City, OR, USA

| | QUEER DESIGN METHODS | | | | PRINCIPLE | | | PROGRAM | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *Universal Design* | *Material Reuse* | *Queer Planting Design* | *Affirmational Signage* | *Accessibility* | *Safety* | *Open-endedness* | *Gathering* | *Solitude* | *Learning* | *Participation* | *Essential Needs* |
| *Jacob Riis Park* | X | X | | X | X | X | X | X | | X | X | X |
| *Hanlan's Point Beach* | | | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | |
| *Stalled!* | X | | X | | X | X | X | | X | | | X |
| *Queer Ecologies Project* | | | X | | | X | | | | X | X | |
| *Cutting Out* | | X | | | | | | | | | X | |
| *Dolly's Park* | | X | | | | | | | | | | |
| *Lincoln City Beaches* | X | | | | X | | | | | | | X |

**Figure 4.2:** Precedent Studies Table of Takeaways. Each precedent study exemplified various design methodologies of universal design, material reuse, queer planting design, and affirmational signage. The importance of these queer design methods is described in Chapter 2, and related to these projects at the conclusion of this chapter. These precedents offered inspiration for the principles and program that would be applied to DB Park's redesigns in Chapter 6.



**Figure 4.3:** "Beachgoers Gather in the Queer Section of Riis Park on a Sunny Summer Day," by Dean Labowitz, 2023.

## QUEERED DESIGN

"Queered Design" explores Jacob Riis Park and Hanlan's Point Beach as sites with relevant lessons for DB Park. These parks were not designed with the intention of being "queer spaces," but were claimed by queer communities. Through usage, parkgoers have "queered" these spaces. By examining ways these parks support belonging, and ways in which parkgoers resisted attempts to undermine the queer character of these spaces, lessons may be derived that apply to DB Park's future.






**Figure 4.4:** "Newly Installed Signage at One of the Entrances to the Beach," by Ahmed Allahwala, 2024.

## Jacob Riis Park

***Name:*** Jacob Riis Park, "The People's Beach", "Riis"
***Location:*** Queens, New York City, New York, USA

### BACKGROUND

Jacob Riis Park is a storied site, with former uses including a military base, a hospital for children with tuberculosis, and a nursing home (99% Invisible 2024). When NYC took over ownership from the military, it envisioned the creation of a public park intended to serve New York's working class (99% Invisible 2024). Riis was redesigned in the 1930s to enhance transit accessibility, in hopes of making the park available to a greater diversity of users ("Riis Park Beach" n.d., para. 4). While many features got renovated, the Neponsit Beach Hospital behind the beach remained untouched, and only closed after a storm in 1998 (99% Invisible 2024). Perhaps due to the isolation afforded by the Hospital, queer people began claiming the beach by the 1940s, first by white gay men, then lesbian women in the 1950s, and Black and Latine beachgoers in the 1960s (99% Invisible 2024; "Riis Park Beach" 2025). The Hospital was demolished in 2023, eliminating what felt like a "protective barrier" (Alfonseca et al. 2024, 3:46). Demolition marked an uptick in arrests for nudity, signaling a "new era of surveillance, policing, and gentrification" (Alfonseca et al. 2024, 3:56).

After Neponsit's demolition, community members have worked to maintain Riis as a safe space for queer beachgoers, with hopes of converting the former hospital site into a land trust and wellness center (Alfonseca et al. 2024). Since Riis Beach only has a single food stand and a few porta potties, advocates hope the wellness center will include bathrooms, changing rooms, and food vendors (Alfonseca et al. 2024). jah elyse sayers, founder of the People's Riisearch Group, also created a park sign "[uplifting] what we can do" and "[reminding] people that we are allowed to be here" (Alfonseca et al. 2024, 3:08). In contrast to the National Park Service's sign on the beach that solely listed prohibited activities, sayers' signage instead reads (Alfonseca et al. 2024, 3:08):

NOTICE. The People's Beach at Jacob Riis Park is a
Queer Space. You may:
Make new friends
Meet your next lover
Build community and power
Run into your ex

Through collective organizing, queer community members also raised money within 24 hours to support beach accessibility via a beach mat and a beach wheelchair (Alfonseca et al. 2024). According to a "riis.beach" Instagram post, the wheelchair is available upon coordination with organizers ("Would a Wheelchair" 2025). Current news on Jacob Riis Park indicates that the beach is still claimed and frequented by queer beachgoers. However, a looming $50 million building restoration plan to a nearby bathhouse has raised concerns of gentrification in the area, and exclusion of lower-income and queer beachgoers (Alfonseca et al. 2024). Time will tell what the repercussions of this development may be, and ways in which queer beachgoers will continue to rally and resist oppressive forces within Jacob Riis Park.

### TAKEAWAYS

Riis Park offers rich inspiration for DB Park. Spatially, Riis reveals the importance of some seclusion for safety and comfort. Prior to its demolition, the Neponsit Hospital acted as a barrier from the beach from the surrounding neighborhood's prying eyes. Notably, once this barrier was absent, surveillance and enforcement measures rose. The beach also highlights the importance of accessible recreation spaces, as demonstrated by its wheelchair mats. Programmatically, Riis beach seems largely open for people to shape as they please, with queer folks using it for recreation, leisure, and political organizing. Additionally, sayers' set a precedent for ways in which signage can affirm joyful, community-building activities and culture. Last, photographs online show how parkgoers have woven fabrics into a chain-link fence by the beach, reusing found materials to beautify a divisive site feature.

In summary, Jacob Riis Park provides the following considerations for DB Park. **Figure 4.5** highlights some of these key elements and takeaways.

- Universal Design, Accessibility, and Essential Needs: Accessibility to beachfront via wheelchair mat
- Material Reuse: Parkgoers participating and reusing/adapting materials through signage, art, and decoration
- Affirmational Signage and Learning: Signage uplifting belonging and queerness, and code of conduct
- Safety from surveillance
- Open-ended space for gathering, leisure, performance, and political organizing
- Participation: Community organizing to advance beach accessibility efforts, create signage




**Figure 4.5:** Queered Design at Jacob Riis Park. Sources, top left to bottom left: Google Earth, 2020, 2021; Keith 2022; Wandel 1971. Sources, top right to bottom right: Malka 2022; Labowitz 2023; Malka n.d.-b.

## Hanlan's Point Beach

***Location:*** Toronto, Ontario, CA

### BACKGROUND

The area now known as Hanlan's Point has long been stewarded by Indigenous peoples known as the Mississuagas (Hawk 2024). The land was purchased by the Canadian government in 2010 for $145 million (Hawk 2024). During settlement in the 1800s, the Hanlan family established a hotel on the beach, which became known as "Hanlan's Point" before it ultimately closed in the early 1900s (Hawk 2024). Hanlan's Point began being frequented by gay men in the 1940s as a space of sexual exploration and community (Hawk 2024). Similarly to DB Park and Jacob Riis Park, Hanlan's has a border offering privacy to beachgoers (Allahwala 2024b). The trees behind the beach shielded "queer sociality from the hetero-prying eyes of law enforcement," offering protection from harassment (Allahwala 2024b, para. 7). Annual "Gay Day Picnics" at Hanlan's starting in 1971 could arguably be Canada's first Pride events (Hawk 2024). Hanlan's was officially designated clothing optional in 1999 (Allahwala 2024b). Unlike Seattle, individuals nude "without lawful excuse" in Toronto are guilty of indecency; therefore, designation legalized nudity at Hanlan's (Breen 2019, para. 7).

Several queer organizing efforts have been made to protect Hanlan's from cultural and physical erosion. Efforts to replace this queer space with developments were made in the 1980s and 2023, but were rebutted through organized resistance (Friend's of Hanlan's n.d.). In the aftermath of the latter proposal and driven by queer community members, the City of Toronto recognized Hanlan's Point Beach as a historically queer space and installed "cultural markers and signage" (Allahwala 2024b, para. 8). Organizers also pushed for the City to consult community members during beach restoration efforts (Lawrence 2023). As coastal trees offered safety to queer community and prevented erosion, shoreline ecology protected beachgoers and the beach (Allahwala 2024). In recognition and return, queer community members fought to support beach ecology. This marked a camaraderie between human and more-than-human inhabitants, revealing an "intimate entanglement of precarious queer infrastructure and coastal ecologies" (Allahwala 2024b, para. 7).

Queer organizers held additional campaigns to reclaim the beach and raise awareness about the history of queer recreation, highlighting Hanlan's significance to city planners that often labeled the space as "under-utilized" (Allahwala 2024b, para. 9). Progress Pride flags have been raised at Hanlan's to elevate queer visibility, however some argue "they risk essentializing queer identity" (Allahwala 2024b, para. 10). While visibility offered protection of the space against OWW erasure, it was accompanied by unwanted attention and prejudices: in a survey held by the Park's Department, queerphobic respondents voiced the beach was now "an unsuitable space for kids and families" (Allahwala 2024b, para. 10).

### TAKEAWAYS

Similarly to Riis and DB Park, Hanlan's Point also has a low-cost barrier to entry compared to other queer gathering spaces such as bars (Hoard 2022). All three parks have visual buffers that offer safety from surveillance and heteronormative pressures. Like DB Park, queer organizing efforts resisted attempts of displacement. The solidarity between humans and more-than-humans demonstrated at Hanlan's Point may also prove relevant to DB Park, as planting new vegetation could be mutually beneficial to human and more-than-human interests and lifeways. In DB Park, vegetation could buffer the park from surveillance, and support greater biodiversity. Care for and stewardship of plants at DB Park - an effort already begun by groups like FoDB - can continue to develop reciprocal relationships between humans and more-than-humans. While DB Park currently holds no nude designation or signage indicating queer usage or histories, Hanlan's has been designated by the City as "clothing optional," and has queer historical/cultural markers, signage, and flags. These proposals, intended to honor and protect the Park's history and culture, may prove applicable to DB Park.

In summary, Hanlan's Point Beach provides the following considerations for DB Park. **Figure 4.6** highlights some of these key elements and takeaways.

- Affirmational Signage and Learning: Signage about queer history, nudity, and code of conduct
- Queer Planting Design: Relationality between humans and more-than-humans through conservation and privacy
- Open-ended space for Solitude, and Gathering
- Safety from surveillance
- Participation: Stewardship of planting that protects queer spaces

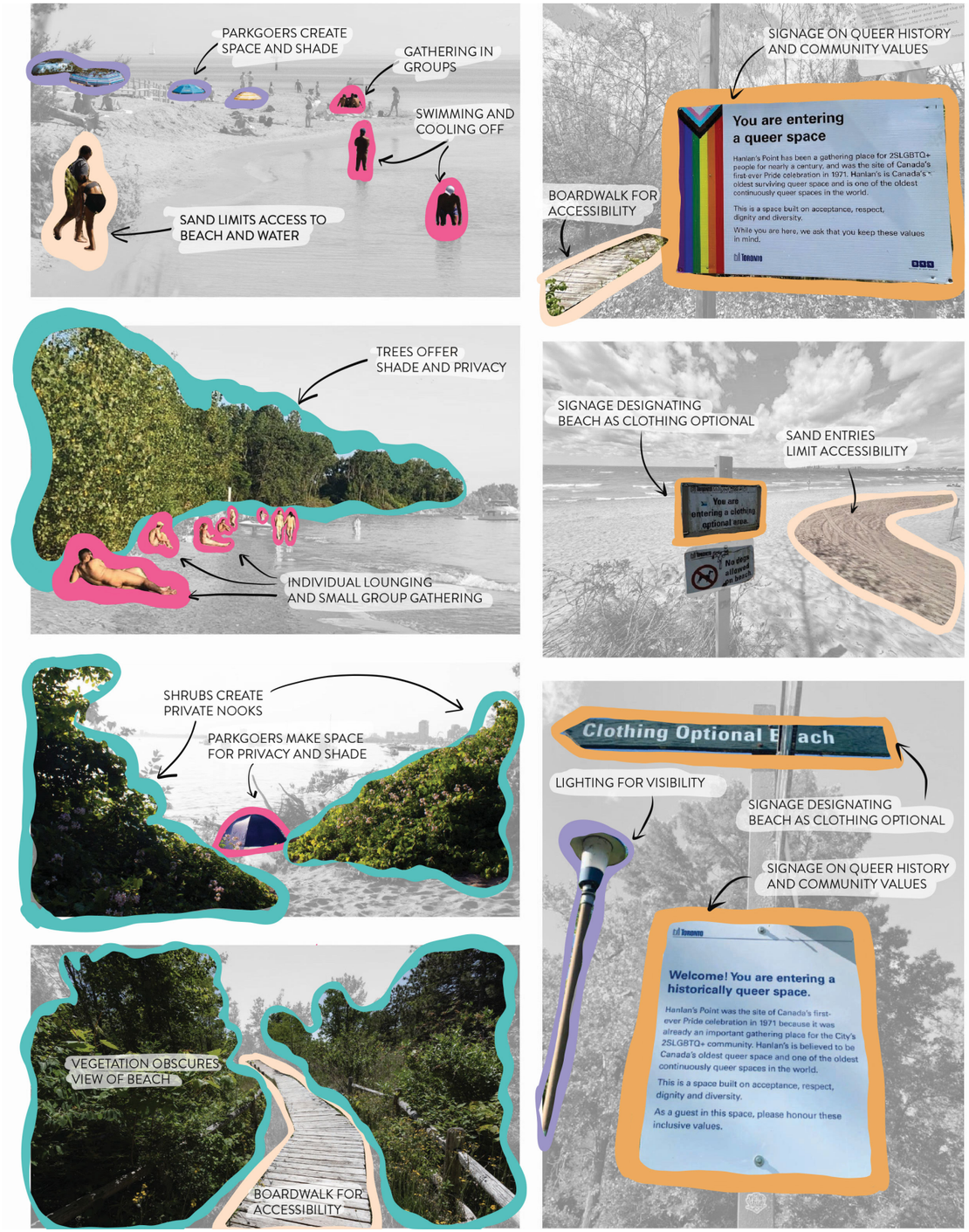



**Figure 4.6:** Queered Design at Hanlan's Point Beach. Sources, top left to bottom left: Lisaj n.d.-b; Mok 2022a; Mok 2022b; Lisaj n.d.-a. Soures, top right to bottom right: Allahwala 2024a; Allahwala 2024c; James 2023.

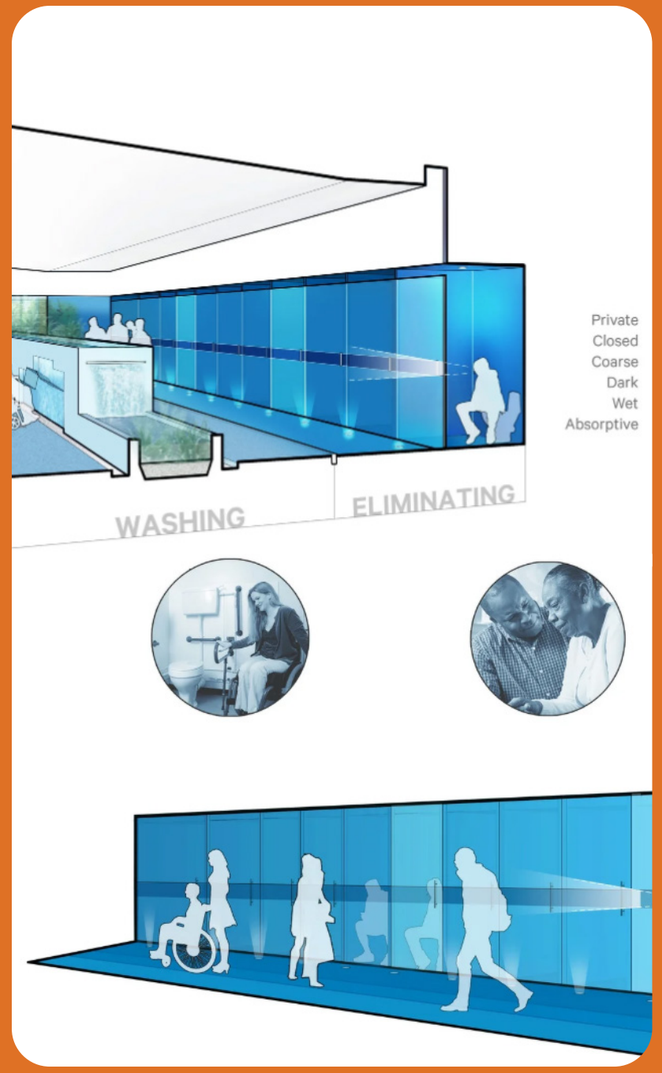



**Figure 4.7:** Prototype: Airport Bathroom Designs, by Sanders et al., n.d.



**Figure 4.8:** "Alice Austen and Gertrude Tate on the Lawn of Their Home at Clear Comfort," by Richard O. Cannon, 1944.

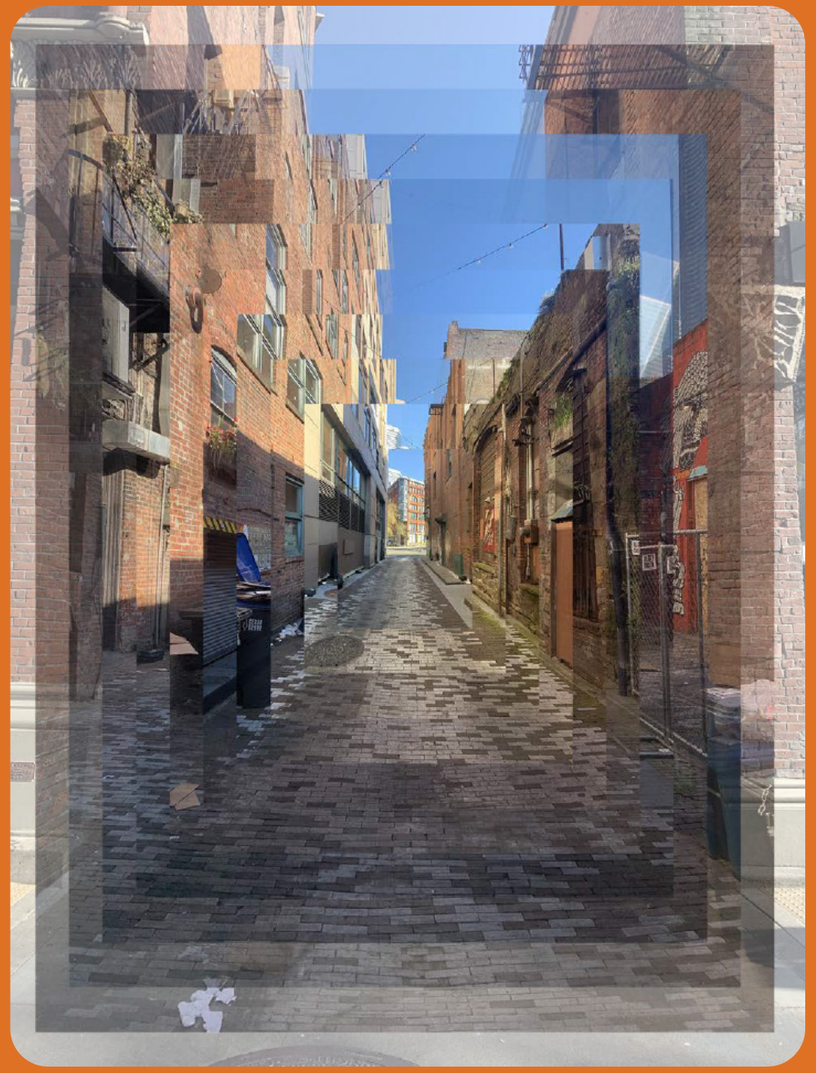


**Figure 4.9:** "Alley 11 South Perspective," by Jake Minden, 2021.

## QUEERLY DESIGNED

"Queerly Designed" examines projects made through a queer lens. I believe these precedents, two of which were developed or co-developed by queer individuals, were created to be intentionally queer through their values, methods, or design. By studying these projects, I hoped to learn ways in which others have practiced queer design in order to apply these ideas to DB Park.

## Stalled! Prototype: Airport

***Type:*** Speculative Design
***Designers:*** Joel Sanders, Susan Stryker, Terry Kogan
***Year:*** 2015

### BACKGROUND

Stalled! is a project envisioned by architect Joel Sanders, transgender historian Susan Stryker, and legal scholar Terry Kogan that aims to create "safe, sustainable and inclusive public restrooms for everyone regardless of age, gender, race, religion and disability" (Sanders et al. 2015, para. 1). Stalled! illuminates the ways in which bathroom inclusivity is not solely a "transgender issue," but rather addresses the equality of all people based on the identities listed above (Sanders et al. 2015, para. 3). In their airport prototype, the designers reimagined this restroom as a space of parallel activities, with features that invite and consider a diverse array of users. Three zones define the space: the Grooming Station, the Washing Station, and the Eliminating Station (Sanders et al. n.d.). Design considerations included using distinct floor materials and shades of blue to differentiate each zone and consider those with visual impairment, multi-level counters for those of different heights and abilities, privacy alcoves, standard, ambulatory, and ADA-compliant eliminating stations, showers, recessed lighting indicating stall usage, and one-way mirrors for safety (Sanders et al. n.d.). Privacy alcoves are multi-functional for such uses as breastfeeding, taking medication, or private prayer (Sanders et al. n.d.). Greywater from sinks is directed into planting beds to nourish vegetation and show opportunities for human and more-than-human connection (Sanders et al. n.d.). This design breaks down binary and gendered restroom dynamics and instead envisions a space based on universal needs for grooming, washing, and eliminating in a way that includes all users.

### TAKEAWAYS

This project reveals the ways in which "queerly" designing a space subverts power structures that exclude based upon race, class, ability level, and age, as well as gender/sexuality. In designing for those most stigmatized, designs better support all users. The airport prototype provided tangible design actions that can support inclusion and safety within queerly designed spaces, and provides examples that can be carried forward into DB Park's redesign. These design considerations include materials to easily distinguish spaces, lighting for safety and ease of use, and multiple options for amenities that support different abilities and ages. More generally, Stalled! revealed the importance of considering how design features can serve multiple purposes and functions, and the power of shared, inclusive spaces.

In summary, Stalled! provides the following considerations for DB Park. **Figure 4.10** highlights some of these key elements and takeaways.

- Universal Design, Accessibility, and Essential Needs: Amenities designed for diverse users; improving accessibility and wayfinding through use of color, texture, and materiality
- Safety and Solitude: Seclusion is balanced with visibility for privacy, safety, and adaptable use
- Open-endedness: Areas are adaptable for users with different needs
- Queer Planting Design: Water shared between humans and more-than-humans can meet needs and benefit both, supporting concepts of queer collectivism

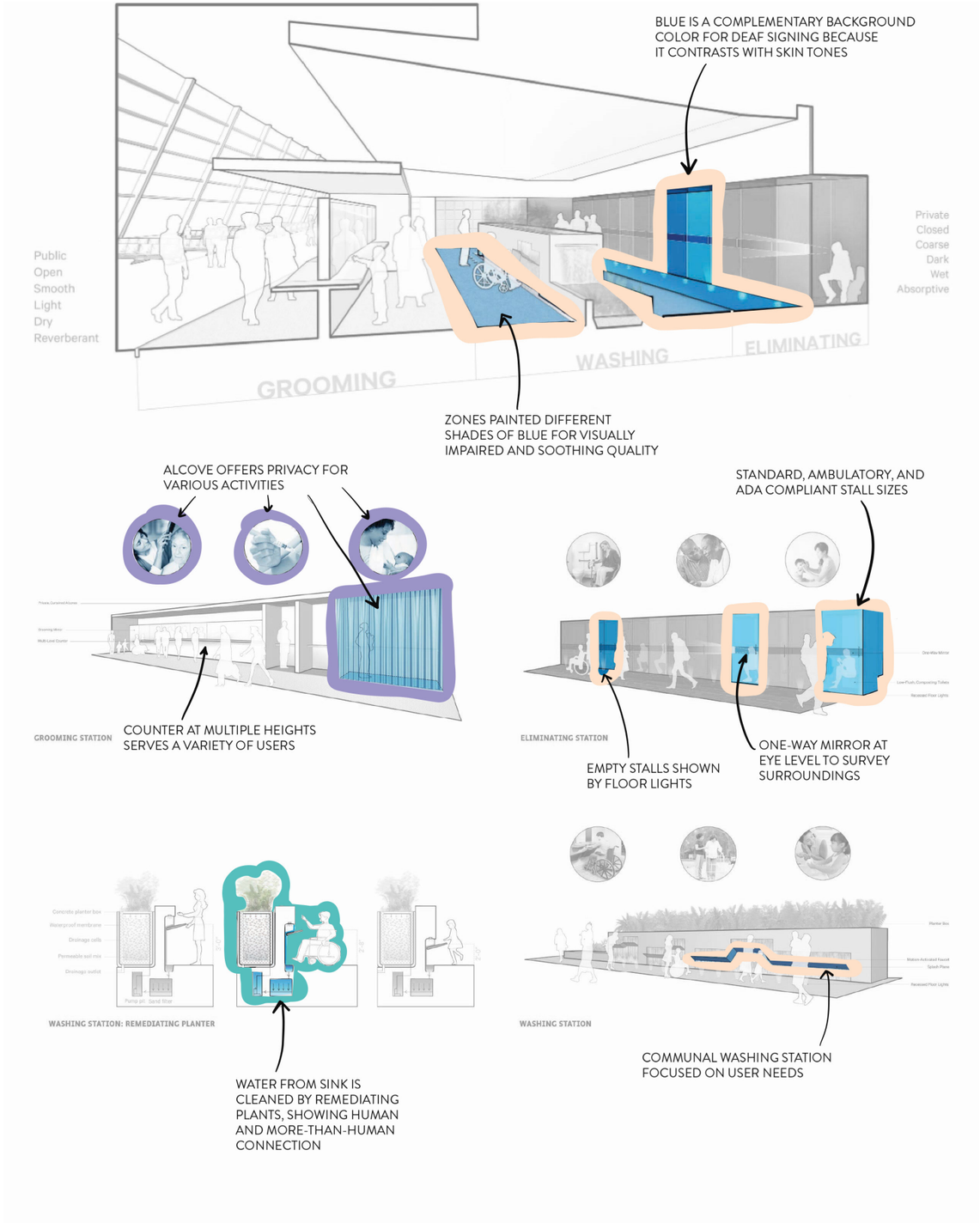



**Figure 4.10:** Queerly Designed Spaces in Stalled! Prototype Airport. Source: Sanders et al. 2015

## Queer Ecologies Project

***Location:*** Staten Island, NY, USA
***Designers:*** Friends of Alice Austen House, New York Restoration Project, students from the Pratt Institute Graduate Center for Planning and the Environment

### BACKGROUND

The Queer Eccologies Project is located on the grounds of the historic Alice Austen House in Staten Island, New York. Alice Austen was a prolific photographer of the late 19th and early 20th century, whose prominent works included New York's immigrant populations and the private lives of Victorian women during the era ("Alice Austen House" n.d.). Austen was also a lesbian, and spent thirty years with her partner Gertrude Tate living in their Staten Island home ("Alice Austen House" n.d.) Austen founded Staten Island's first official garden club, and used her own garden as a "muse" and a "safe space for her female cohort" as it offered a reprieve from OWW restrictions of the time ("Building a Staten Island Garden" 2023, para. 3; The Alice Austen House Museum 2023). Tragically, Tate and Austen were evicted from their home in 1945 due to financial strain, and were forced to live apart after their separation as Austen's family rejected their queer relationship ("Alice Austen House" n.d.). After their passing, Tate and Austen's final wishes to be buried together were rejected by their families ("Alice Austen House" n.d.).

After Tate and Austen left their home, the estate fell into disrepair (The Alice Austen House Museum n.d.). However, neighbors rallied to save the house during the 1960s in the face of looming redevelopment threats (The Alice Austen House Museum n.d.). Neighbors raised funds to restore the house and grounds through a budget proffered by the City, and went on to add the Alice Austen House to the National Register of Historic Places, and designate it as a New York City Landmark and National Historic Landmark (The Alice Austen House Museum n.d.). The National Register of Historic Places listing was later updated in 2017 to recognize the LGBT history of the site (National Trust for Historic Preservation n.d.).

Building upon the House's queer history, and the role the garden historically played in queer liberation and freedom of expression, current stewards of the property began the Queer Ecologies Project in 2023. The Project aims to celebrate the "widespread gender fluidity of the natural world while focusing on plants that are particularly loud and proud in their functions, or are culturally associated" with the queer community (Krueger 2023, para. 3). The garden includes ornamental planting beds, community garden beds for education and programming, and native shrubs and perennials ("Building a Staten Island Garden" 2023). The garden's queer plant palette includes species such as Jack-in-the-pulpit (a plant capable of changing genders based on environmental conditions), shiitake mushrooms (fungi being capable of varied reproductive methods), lavender (famed for its queer cultural significance), and black cohosh (a hermaphroditic, androgynous plant with medicinal properties related to gynecology) (Krueger 2023; Alice Austen House n.d.-b). Vegetation is also accompanied by explanatory signage, and tended to by queer-allied student groups (Krueger 2023). Currently, the Alice Austen House offers educational programs through the Queer Ecologies Project, including garden care and planning with students, sustainable photography workshops, photowalks, mycology, composting, and seed workshops, pollinator education, and LGBTQIA+ historic landscape interpretation events (Alice Austen House n.d.-a).

### TAKEAWAYS

The Queer Ecologies Project contains several takeaways for DB Park. First, the garden's seclusion allowed Austen to live queerly with her partner and friends, reinforcing the importance of partial privacy for greater freedom. Second, the Alice Austen House stands as a testament to the impact of community organizing and utilization of landmarking to preserve the historic integrity of the landscape. Last, the Queer Ecologies Project represents a reimagination of conventional landscaping practices, and cisgender/heteronormative conceptions of plant biology. By educating visitors on the sexual and gender diversity filling their surroundings, queerness is shown as naturally abundant, diverse, and worthy of celebration.

In summary, the Queer Ecologies Project provides the following considerations for DB Park. **Figure 4.11** highlights some of these key elements and takeaways.

- Queer Planting Design: Utilizing a planting palette that highlights queerness based on sexual/gender identity and/or cultural significance
- Learning: Educational signage on queer ecology
- Participation: Community stewardship of queerly planted spaces
- Safety from surveillance




**Figure 4.11:** Queerly Designed Spaces in Queer Ecologies Project. Sources, top left to bottom left: "Alice Austen on the Porch" 1900, Austen 1891, Agins 2023. Sources, top right to bottom right: Cannon 1944, Alice Austen House n.d.-c, Navratil 2023.

## Cutting Out

***Location:*** Seattle, Washington, USA
***Designer:*** Jake Minden
***Year:*** 2021

### BACKGROUND

In his thesis, Jake Minden queerly approaches landscape design by exploring "generative dismantling" and "site reading." Minden defines generative dismantling as "an active or productive undoing," and applies the concept to the method of collage as an "act of unmaking or remaking that reconfigures previous work" (Minden 2021, 11, 30). As a queer design method, collage can blur and break boundaries of time, space, and scale in order to subvert dominant narratives and uplift otherness (Minden 2021, 30-34). Through these deconstructions, distortions and reorientations, collage is capable of creating "queer or alternative futures" that break conventions enforced by OWW paradigms (Minden 2021, 35).

When the ideologies of collage are applied to conventional site analysis, "site reading" emerges as an alternative queer method. Minden describes site reading as "a queer assessment of site, which takes a more in depth, and personal approach" to a site and "processes that create and recreate it" (Minden 2021, 82). Coupling collage techniques with first-hand experiences of "textures, remnants of past layers, sensory experiences... interesting art, and traces of use," Minden studied Seattle's Pioneer Square alleyways as a queer landscape typology (Minden 2021, 97). Minden additionally utilizes site reading as a way to reveal spatial performativity within a landscape. Adapted from Judith Butler's framing of performativity, spatial performativity describes how "people, identities, and bodies shape and are shaped by space" (Minden 2021, 66). This concept is significant in landscape design, as design choices can impose OWW pressures on peoples and bodies, or support their liberation and expression. Conversely, people, identities, and bodies will shape the spaces they inhabit, with impacts ranging from subtle indications of use to dramatic reclamation, adaptation, or deconfiguration of space. Learning to recognize spatial performativity through careful observation, inhabitation, and participation via Minden's site reading offers ways for designers to understand the impact of design choices and the agency of people on landscapes.

Minden additionally couples queerly approached methods of site reading with conventional site analysis techniques, such as the usage of aerial photos and mapping, to ground personal observations in context (Minden 2021, 97). Ultimately, this combination of generative dismantling, site reading, and site analysis allowed Minden to queer conventional design methods, and place "greater value on ephemeral and experiential qualities of a site" (Minden 2021, 130).

### TAKEAWAYS

Generative disassembly through collage allows for the breaking down of a site in order to reconfigure it to queer ends. Whether this is through the inversion of OWW elements, a celebration of otherness, or the breaking of rules and conventions, such techniques enable a visioning of more just alternative futures. The concept of deconstructing OWW structures for queer use is a concept applicable to DB Park. Similarly, applying a "site reading" technique will allow me to develop a deeper connection to DB Park, and recognize the relationality between DB Park, parkgoers, and park inhabitants. While I still aim to ground my design proposals in community engagement, having my own relationship with the landscape and its persons - human and more-than-human - will strengthen my design approach. Taken together, Minden's methods offer new ways to queerly reimagine DB Park.

In summary, the "Cutting Out" provides the following considerations for DB Park. **Figure 4.12** highlights some of these key elements and takeaways.

- Material Reuse: Generative dismantling as a queer method, or taking something as it was and transforming it into something that it could be
- Participation: Using site reading and annotation of textures, past layers, senses, and usage to learn ways in which parkgoers shape and are shaped by DB Park

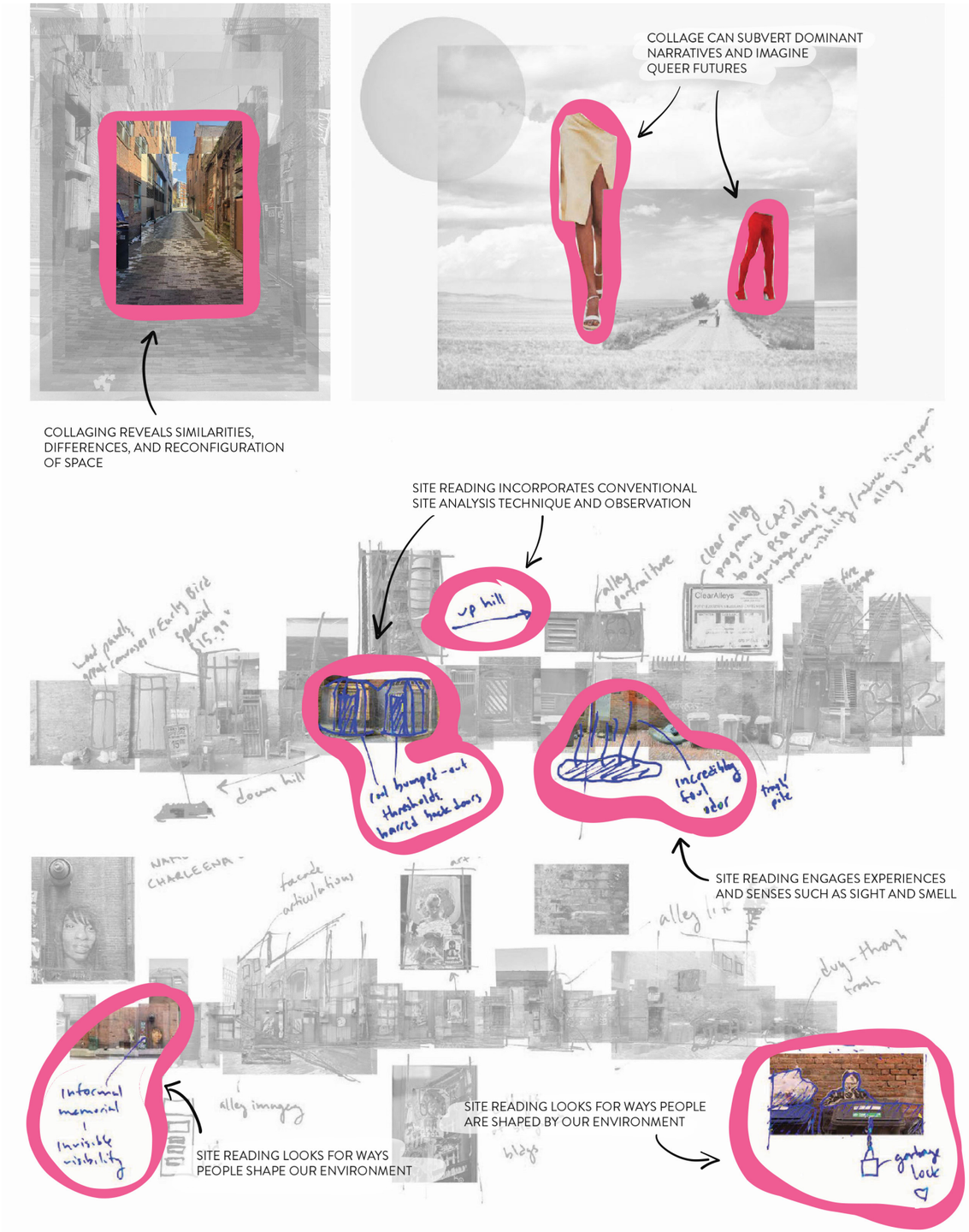



**Figure 4.12:** Queerly Designed Methods in Cutting Out. Sources, top left to top right: Minden 2021, 31; Minden 2021, 136. Sources, middle and bottom: Minden 2021, 102; Minden 2021, 98.



**Figure 4.13:** "Dolly's Park: Keeping It In The Neighborhood," by Barrett Doherty, 2025.

## QUEERING DESIGN

"Queering Design" focuses on ways in which conventional landscape design can practice queer ethics. The landscapes in this category were not made to be intentionally queer, but were created with methods that uphold queer values of multiplicity or collectivism. As a result, I believe these landscapes provide inspiration for DB Park by demonstrating ways in which "queering" can occur in conventional landscape design.






**Figure 4.14:** "Travel Oregon Bolsters Tourism Efforts in Local Communities Across the State Through $1.4 Million in Capacity and Small Project Grants" by Lincoln City Parks and Recreation, 2023.

## Dolly's Park

***Location:*** Brooklyn, New York, USA
***Designer and Builder:*** Assemblage, Field Form
***Year:*** 2021

### BACKGROUND

Dolly's Park highlights the possibilities of material reuse as a queering of landscape design methodology. Located in the Gowanus neighborhood of Brooklyn, NY, Dolly's Park formerly stood as a gravel lot. Through collaboration between landscape architects, builders, and neighbors, the Park was redesigned to improve the accessibility and vibrancy of this space (Assemblage Landscape Architecture n.d.). Salvage and reuse of materials were central to the conception and implementation of this project, with the aim of "[preserving] material legacy" of buildings undergoing demolition in Gowanus ("Dolly's Park" 2025, para. 1). The design team was able to recover and adapt bricks, wood timbers, concrete aggregate, trees, and tree stumps for the Park ("Dolly's Park" 2025). Yellow pine wood timbers, formerly the roof of a nearby warehouse, were transformed into benches for Dolly's Park ("Dolly's Park" 2025). Bricks from a demolished building's walls were converted into pathways ("Dolly's Park" 2025). For both wood and brick, the materials were so hyperlocal that the building team was able to load them onto wheelbarrows at their original site, and take them over to the Park ("Dolly's Park" 2025). Additional dead bricks - bricks on discounted sale before heading to landfills - were also acquired for the project ("Dolly's Park" 2025). In total, 50 square feet of brick, 32 linear feet of wood timbers, 200 cubic feet of recycled concrete aggregate, two trees, and tree stumps were salvaged for Dolly's Park ("Dolly's Park" 2025). The benefits of salvaging materials included a reduced environmental footprint, reduced cost, and preservation of local history by revitalizing materials that may otherwise have gone to a landfill ("Dolly's Park" 2025).

### TAKEAWAYS

Dolly's Park exemplifies ways in which material reuse offers futures for queering design. Material sourcing is frequently founded on unsustainable, extractive, carbon-intensive methods. Conversely, the hyper-local sourcing demonstrated by Dolly's Park presents a subversion or "queering" of these OWW practices. Beyond its ecological benefit, material reuse offers a way to recognize the agency and life of more-than-human entities. In OWW design, materials such as wood or bricks would have been viewed in isolation, and thoughtlessly thrown away when they no longer offered human utility. Alternatively in queer design at Dolly's Park, designers spent time to recover and transform these materials. This effort shows greater appreciation for histories these materials hold, and what potential futures they'll inhabit. As such, reuse offers a method of queering by respecting a multiplicity of more-than-human beings, and imagining just futures through sustainable practices.

In summary, Dolly's Park provides the following considerations for DB Park. **Figure 4.15** highlights some of these key elements and takeaways.

- Material Reuse to reduce carbon footprint and recognize history of more-than-human materials

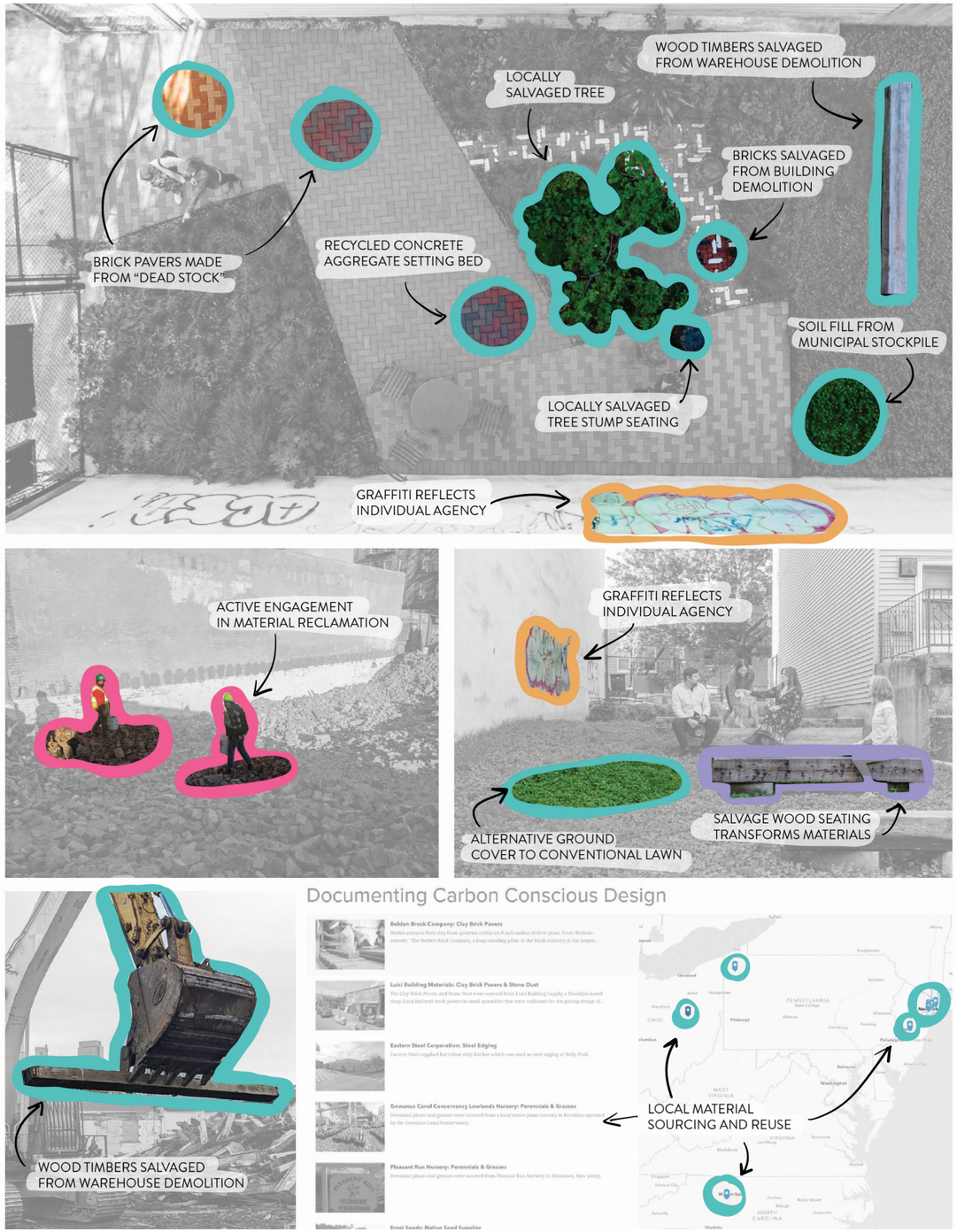



**Figure 4.15:** Queering Design in Dolly's Park. Source, top: Assemblage Landscape Architecture n.d., Dolly's Park Plan View. Sources, middle left to right: Field Form 2025, Brick Reuse; Doherty 2025. Sources, bottom left to bottom right: Field Form 2025, Timber Reuse; Assemblage Landscape Architecture n.d., Material Sourcing Map.

## Lincoln City Beaches

***Location:*** Lincoln City, Oregon, USA
***Designer and Builder:*** Lincoln City Parks and Recreation
***Year:*** 2022

### BACKGROUND

The Lincoln City Parks and Recreation Department has worked to create more universally accessible beaches for visitors. This equitable design represents a "queering" of recreation spaces by supporting multiple ways of being. The parks department has three beach wheelchairs available for parkgoers, held in rental lockers that can be reserved and unlocked through a mobile application (Lincoln City Parks & Rec n.d.). The chairs are available at no charge, seven days a week, throughout the year; from November to April, the chairs can be rented from 8am-5pm, or from 8am-10pm from May to October (Lincoln City Parks & Rec n.d.). Three of Lincoln City's beaches also have portable beach mats that meet ADA compliance standards for beach access (Lincoln City Parks & Rec n.d.). The mats, purchased in 2022, 2024, and 2025, now offer 900' of beach access to users of all ability needs (Lincoln City Parks & Rec n.d.).

### TAKEAWAYS

Offering equitable access to a multiplicity of parkgoers, as demonstrated by the Lincoln City beaches, is a method of queering design. Beach wheelchairs and beach mats invite users of all ability levels and ages to recreate at the beach.

In summary, Lincoln City beaches provide the following considerations for DB Park. **Figure 4.16** highlights some of these key elements and takeaways.

- Universal Design, Accessibility, and Essential Needs: Accessibility to beachfront via beach wheelchair and wheelchair mat




**Figure 4.16:** Queering Design in Lincoln City Beaches. Source, top: Lincoln City Parks and Recreation 2023. Source, bottom left to right: P.N.W. Social 2025; Lincoln City Parks & Rec n.d.




**Figure 4.17:** Queer Design Methods and Precedents. The precedent studies described above reveal universal design, material reuse, queer planting design, and affirmational signage as methods of queer design for DB Park.

## TAKEAWAYS: DESIGN METHODS

In answering "how can design be done queerly?", I believe these precedents offer four queer design methodologies that can be applied to DB Park's redesign. These methods include universal design, material reuse, queer planting design, and affirmational signage as shown in **Figure 4.17**. The importance of these methods was described in Chapter 2 (see: "Why Does Queering Design Matter?"), but will be reintroduced here as they relate to the precedent studies.

### Universal Design

Universal design upholds queer multiplicity by creating spaces that support belonging for people of various identities and abilities. The importance of universal design as a queer method is demonstrated through the precedents Stalled!, Lincoln City Beaches, and Jacob Riis Park. Jacob Riis Park and Lincoln City Beaches both implement universal design's core principle of equitable use, by creating opportunities for parkgoers of all ability levels to access and enjoy the beach. Stalled! demonstrated universal design's core principles of equitable, flexible, and intuitive use by having spaces be multifunctional, having amenities for people of different heights and abilities, and having material/lighting elements distinguish different spaces. Universal design, as demonstrated in these precedents, is a queer method I applied to DB Park's redesign.

### Material Reuse

Material reuse enacts queer collectivism and multiplicity by breaking human/more-than-human binaries through sustainability and by recognizing inherent value in more-than-human beings. This queer method was practiced in Dolly's Park, Jacob Riis Park, and the Cutting Out precedent. In Dolly's Park, designers reused materials to reduce the project's carbon footprint and highlight histories of more-than-human materials. In Jacob Riis

Park, parkgoers beautified a chain link fence through pieces of reused fabrics. In Cutting Out, Minden highlighted how materials can be reconfigured in order to produce queer futures, subvert OWW powers, and uplift otherness. Processes of material reuse served as inspiration for DB Park's redesign.

## Queer Planting Design

Queer planting design celebrates queer multiplicity. This method demonstrates the naturalness and beauty of queerness through non-cisgender/non-heterosexual plants, or plants with cultural significance to queer communities. Queer planting design was practiced in the Queer Ecologies Project and Hanlan's Point Beach. In the Queer Ecologies Project, community members centered planting design and education around a queer plant palette. At Hanlan's Point Beach, organizers fought to protect local trees and coastal ecosystems with significance to queer communities. The utilization of queer plants and practice of collective support between humans and more-than-humans were qualities I planned to incorporate in DB Park.

## Affirmational Signage

In this thesis, I created the phrase "Affirmational Signage" to mean signage that uplifts belonging and invites freedom, multiplicity, and connection, rather than restricts bodies or activities. I took great inspiration for this concept from jah elyse sayers at Jacob Riis Beach, as well as Hanlan's Point Beach and the Queer Ecologies Project. At Riis, sayers' signage listed possible beach activities to include "[making] new friends" or "[building] community and power," encouraging queer uses of space (Alfonseca et al. 2024, 3:08). At Hanlan's, signage described the queer history of the park and listed shared community values, emplacing queer belonging and culture. Last, educational signage at the Queer Ecologies Project reflects opportunities for individuals to learn about queer ecologies, and feel affirmed through visibility and connection to more-than-human worlds. These queer methods of affirmational signage support belonging and offered inspiration for DB Park.

The case studies presented in this section began to answer the question of how design can be done queerly. By studying examples of Queer Design, Queerly Designed, and Queering Design, I identified universal design, material reuse, queer planting design, and affirmational signage as four queer methodologies. Next, I needed to undergo a process of community engagement to learn what queer parkgoers wanted in DB Park. Community engagement is described in Chapter 5. By applying this chapter's queer design methods to community insights from Chapter 5, I created redesigns of DB Park that are explored in Chapter 6.

# *What do Queer Community Members Want in Denny Blaine Park?*

05



## ONLINE RESEARCH AND INITIAL CONVERSATIONS

In order to answer the third guiding question of my thesis - what do queer community members want or need in DB Park? - I conducted community engagement. The process included a survey and interviews with human parkgoers, as well as site reading at DB Park. Engagement with human parkgoers included phases of research, Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval, outreach, the survey and interviews, and analysis as shown in **Figure 5.1**. Inquiries in the survey and interviews built on online research about the park, its context, and initial conversations with two active community members. Site reading involved the on-site weaving of experiential frames at DB Park, in order to create a personal connection and better understand how humans and more-than-humans interact with the space. Information gathered through community engagement and the precedent studies provided critical insights for imagining future queer designs for DB Park.

Before reaching out to community members for engagement, I wanted to be well-versed in DB Park's history and current discourse. I began by researching the history of the park, queer usage of the space, and the current lawsuit and abatement plan. I gained some familiarity with the major stakeholders involved and their respective stances on queerness/nudity or perceptions of illegal activity at the park by delving into their websites. The stakeholders included FoDB, Denny Blaine Park for All, and the City. Through this process, I oriented myself about ways the groups are acting to support queer belonging, or ways queer belonging is threatened at DB Park.

During this phase of preliminary research, I met with two parkgoers who were actively involved in the 2025 guerrilla puppet show held at DB Park in protest of the lawsuit and abatement plan (AGPhoto 2025). One of these parkgoers was Hope Freije, whose experience as a parkgoer and work as an urban designer and planner informed her views of DB Park as a queer space. These parkgoers provided their perspectives on DB Park,

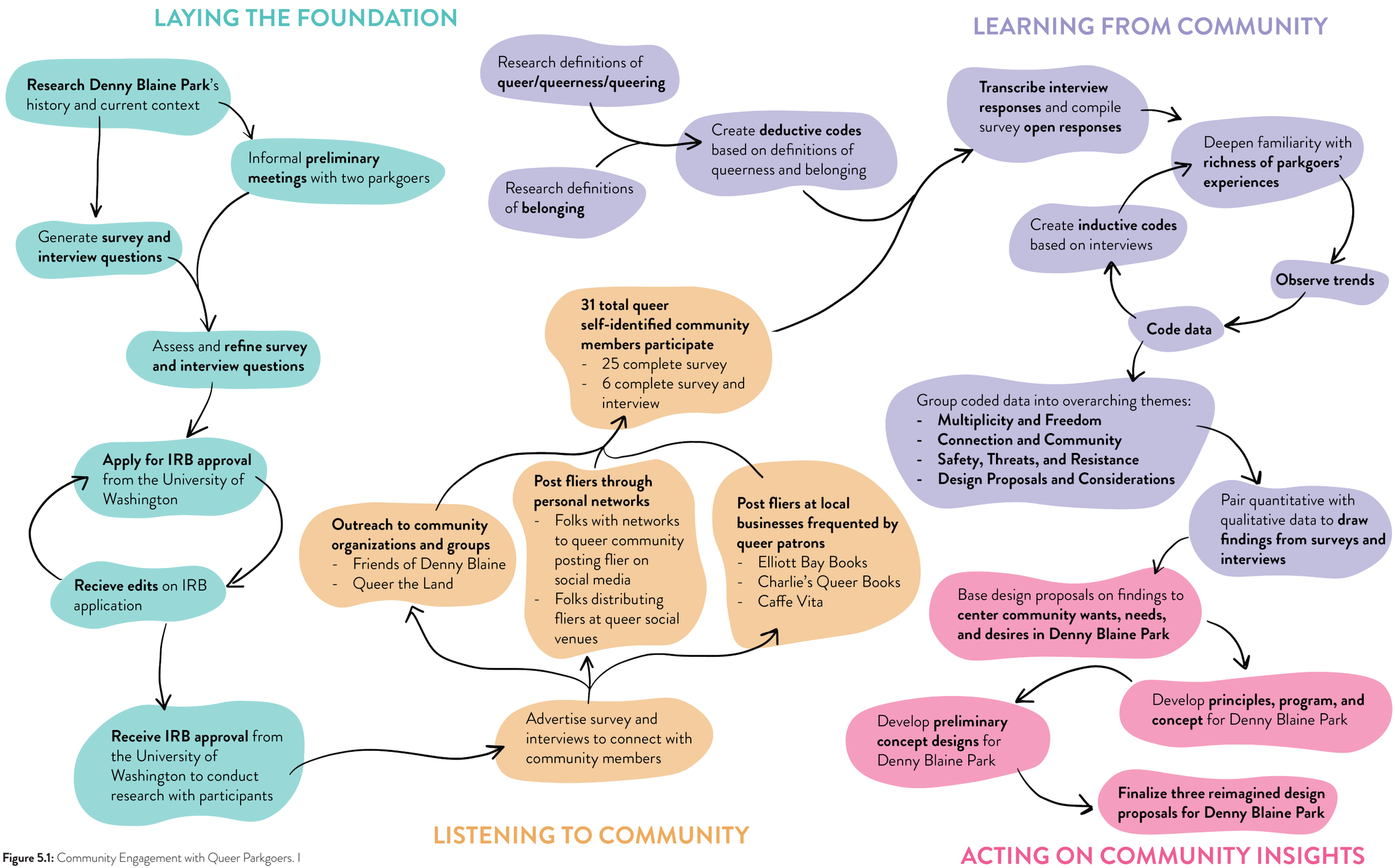



**Figure 5.1:** Community Engagement with Queer Parkgoers. I conducted phases of preliminary research, a survey and interviews with queer-identified parkgoers, and analysis to ground DB Park redesigns in community interests. Although the process had limitations, this attempt at community-driven design aimed to center parkgoers' experiences and expertise as a queer design method.

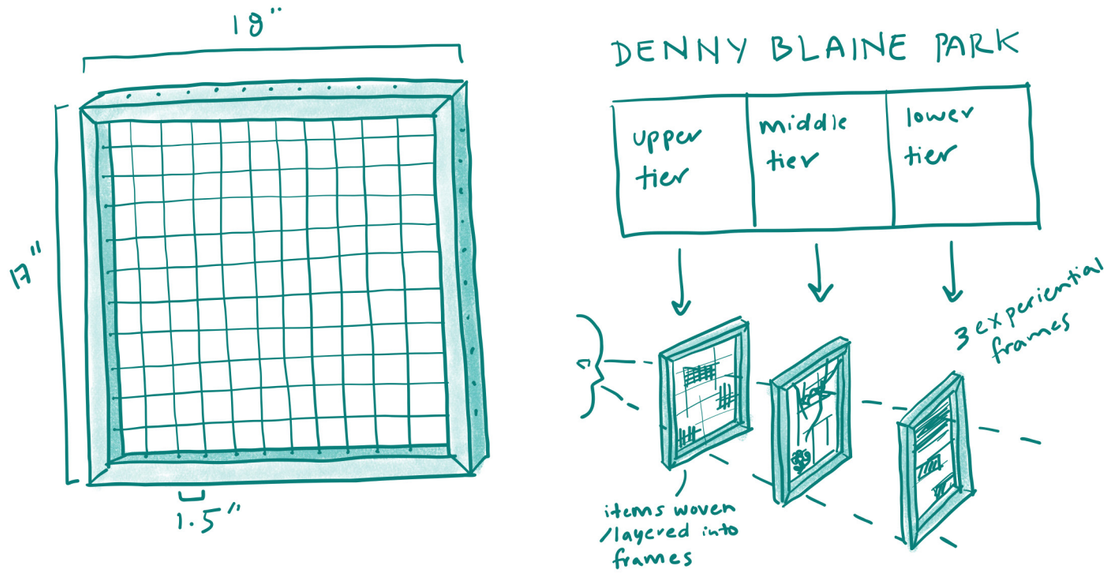



**Figure 5.2:** Site Reading Concept Sketch. Site reading was used as a queer design method to form personal and experiential connections with DB Park and its humans and more-than-humans users. Three frames were woven for the three tiers of DB Park.

its various stakeholder groups, and some opinions on preliminary interview questions. Importantly, they recommended including questions regarding surveillance at DB Park. These conversations offered additional context for the park, and a more personal interpretation of its history compared to the online research I had conducted to date. Taken together, the preliminary online research and informal meetings laid a groundwork from which I moved into site readings, the survey, and interviews to engage with community members dedicated to DB Park. The research on DB Park's history and context is described in Chapter 3.

## SITE READING

### Purpose

Inspired by Jake Minden's thesis "Cutting Out," I engaged in site reading at DB Park in order to explore the park through de- and re-construction. The site readings included the incorporation of photographs taken on-site, found materials from the site, and recycled fabrics purchased at a reuse store. I wove or affixed all of these materials into a woven frame. Each complete woven frame was a representation of a tier within DB Park. **Figure 5.2** shows conceptual drawings for the site reading technique, including the triad of woven frames. Through site reading, I hoped to develop a personal understanding of DB Park and its human and more-than-human inhabitants, which would guide my site redesign. By spending time in-person at the park, I started to create my own emotional connection and memories associated with the space. In choosing found materials to weave into the frames - twigs, leaves, trash, shells, bark, photographs - I was particularly attentive to include elements that seemed important to the park's qualities or essence. I witnessed how humans and more-than-humans shape and were shaped by the park by seeing where and what they did. I learned where I liked to go on the beach, or what places felt less welcoming due to factors of surveillance, environmental effects (sun/shade/rain), or views of the park, lake or mountains. In total, site reading lent me the opportunity to have first-hand knowledge of how humans and more-than-humans enjoy the park, and personal reflections and emotional experiences of the space.

The personal, experiential knowledge gained through site reading could not be gleaned from conventional site analysis techniques alone. Conventional site analysis typically includes mapping information such as sun/shade, existing vegetation, topography, hydrology, and transportation. Additionally, designers will usually conduct site visits to observe and photograph the landscape and its surroundings. The maps, diagrams, and site visits conducted during conventional site analysis are valuable, and greatly assist in making design decisions. However, I believe they lack a deeper sense of multiplicity and collectivism present in queer design.

Conventional design makes it easy to abstract, undervalue, or ignore landscapes and beings. The information gathered from maps and brief visits can feel impersonal and removed from the landscape itself. A tree on an aerial map can appear as a circle; topography appears as lines; human and more-than-human inhabitants can be completely omitted. Even with site visits, brief visits, sketches, and photographs only begin to form personal connections with beings in a landscape. The abstraction arising from conventional mapping or lack of personal familiarity with a space can make it easy to overlook the rich multiplicity of life present in a landscape. Solely relying on conventional site analysis can lead designers to make decisions without appreciating the multiple ways of being present on a site (microbes, trees, birds, humans, and beyond), or understanding our significant connection to these beings (air quality improvement, food webs, erosion control, and beyond). In other words, conventional site analysis can disregard queer multiplicity and collectivism.

Conversely, site reading was a process that allowed me to spend more time on site to develop a fuller knowledge and recognition its patterns and connections. I was able to witness, experience, and appreciate the beings whom I would be impacting through design. When I saw a tree on my conventional site analysis map, I recalled moving under their enormous canopies and weaving pieces of their bark into my wooden frames. When I made decisions to remove areas of existing vegetation, I did so with full understanding of the birds and plants I would be uprooting, having collected their feathers and foliage. When I chose locations for gathering and solitude, I remembered which areas felt important to parkgoers, and the feelings of leisure and ease they radiated while relaxing. Site reading led me to more fully acknowledge and respect the landscape, its beings, and its uses. The process of weaving frames, paired with conventional site analysis techniques, allowed me to develop an understanding of DB Park more deeply rooted in multiplicity and collectivism.

I spent the most time at DB Park during the Fall and Winter of 2025. Since I wasn't there during warmer seasons, this likely impacted my experiences and perceptions of park usage.

### Methods

While Minden used paper as his medium, I chose to incorporate his concept of collage with the fabric-art work of queer Latinx artist Ben Cuevas for my process of site reading (Cuevas n.d.). In their project "Queering the Landscape," Cuevas created knit landscapes of Joshua Tree park using the "faggoted fringe" stitch. Cuevas' knit landscapes were a transformation of the traditional "hetero-male-dominated practice of landscape painting" through a genderqueer, Latinx perspective (Cuevas, 2019). Examples of Minden's and Cuevas' works are shown in **Figure 5.3**. Similar to Minden and Cuevas who sought to queer landscape representation, I felt drawn to combining their woven, annotative, and collaged methods to develop a queer site reading methodology. Additionally, I felt that fabric arts would lend itself to a deeper reflection and understanding of DB Park, as the threads could be used to affix materials found on site and photographs taken on site.

For their artworks, Cuevas utilized a single wood beam from which they wove their landscapes downward. For my site reading, I used a four-sided wooden frame with an interior woven grid for two reasons. The first reason is practical: I do not have the level of skill Cuevas has in weaving to create such intricate pieces. Second, I wanted my frame to serve as a "blank slate" upon which I could weave and layer my experiential annotations of DB Park. In this way, the woven frame becomes a receptacle for the site readings, rather than being the focus of the piece itself. The frames were intentionally simple and basic so that they would recede as background and the weaving would jump to the foreground. I constructed them with the help of fabrication lab staff at the University of Washington, Rae Moore and Jack Bowen. The frames were a 18-inch x 17-inch sized square made of unfinished wood. I drilled holes along each side at 1.5-inch intervals and wove a grid using white thread. I purchased yarn and fabric from Seattle Recreative to use for weaving. Since I hold



**Figure 5.3:** "Untitled" and "Future Horizons 1". The works of Cuevas (left; "Untitled") and Minden (right; "Future Horizons 1") reveal ways that weaving, collage, and generative disassembly can queer landscape explorations. These concepts were combined in my site reading techniques to generate three woven frames for DB Park. Sources: Cuevas 2019; Minden 2021.

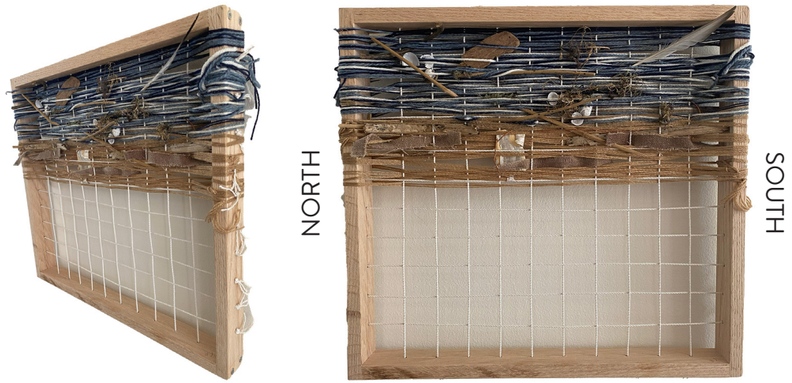



**Figure 5.4:** Site Reading Progression. Site reading was conducted over the course of several site visits, and involved weaving of found materials, reused materials, and photographs taken on-site. Frames were oriented so the top edge pointed toward Lake Washington.







**Figure 5.5:** Site Reading Keyed to DB Park Map. One frame was woven per tier at DB Park. I worked from east to west.
Aerial Image Source: "Google Earth", July 2024.

sustainability and material reuse as a core tenet to queer design, I tried to utilize as many second-hand items as possible for the frames. These three frames served as the basis for my site reading methods.

For the site reading, I wanted to focus my efforts on areas that were more frequented by queer and nudist users. Therefore, I chose to assign one frame for each of the three tiers at DB Park as shown in **Figure 5.4**. Since my research up to this phase indicated that the upper grass loop was largely under-utilized by parkgoers, I did not create a frame for site reading in this area. I began my site reading at the beach or lowest tier at DB Park, then moved to the middle tier, and finally to the upper tier. For the site reading, I spent several hours seated within and walking around each tier. The beach tier frame took roughly 7-8 hours to complete, while the middle and upper tiers took between 1.5-3 hours. I was unfortunately unable to dedicate as much time to the latter two tiers due to time constraints. Since I did my site reading during Fall and Winter, I also viewed far fewer parkgoers than are present during peak Summer season. The relatively short time I spent on site compared to a full-fledged parkgoer, and reduced park attendance, means my perceptions and experience of the park and its users were also limited.

The weaving incorporated a combination of colored thread, fabric, and buttons purchased from a reclaimed crafts store and brought to the park, as well as objects such as bark, foliage, feathers, shells, and trash found within the tier, photographs taken on site, and site annotations I made during this time on-site. In order to maintain people's comfort and privacy, I did not include photographs with any parkgoers, and took almost all of my photos when nobody else was present in the park.

I chose to incorporate materials or photographs representative of certain qualities, beings, or materials (birds, vegetation, stone blocks, signage, Porta Potty, light fixtures, etc.) that I felt were important or defining to each tier. What I determined to be "important" was highly subjective to my personal experience, and partly instinctual. For some elements, I thought more



**Figure 5.6:** Complete Site Reading Frames. The above frames offer an experiential reading of DB Park. The materials, photographs, fabrics, and yarn offer a window into DB Park and the qualities/beings that shape its space. Bark, foliage, branches, feathers, trash, shells, sand, charcoal, driftwood, berries, and on-site photographs reflect an essence of each tier. Recognizing what elements were included or omitted through the process of site reading highlights those qualities I felt were formative or indicative of the space.

deliberately about what I wanted to include based on what I believed influenced my experience of the space. For example, I saw the large trees on site, and felt they were important to the park due to their maturity, privacy and shade afforded, and habitat created. As a result, I intentionally sought out pieces of their bark to weave into frames. For other elements such as the bird feather, I randomly happened upon them and added them to represent uses/beings less obvious to me. I generally placed materials into the frame based on their relative locations in the park. The "top" of my frame pointed east toward Lake Washington, as shown in **Figure 5.4**. I overlapped elements to reinforce the quality or connections present in certain spaces. For example, I placed shells, sea grasses, and sand into the beach tier along the "water," or twigs over fabrics to show density of foliage. Overall, I tried to be fairly instinctual with my weaving, as I wanted to see what organically emerged for me. By seeing what I chose to include or omit, I was able to physically identify what beings or qualities of DB Park stood out to me most prominently.



For each tier site reading, I divided my analysis into human and more-than-human observations, and personal reflections on site. Many observations/materials incorporated into the frames themselves focus on the landscape and more-than-human beings. While I observed and reflected upon human uses of the park, I unfortunately did not incorporate as many of those experiences into the frames. In part, I did not want to have photographs of parkgoers due to privacy. Partially, I did not think to include other forms of annotation or abstraction of human use into the frames. The lack of human representation is a limitation of my site reading process, but may also reflect which beings were most prominent to me during this time. Images of the completed site reading frame triad are shown in **Figure 5.6.**

# Findings

## LOWER TIER / FRAME 1

For the lower tier, I seated myself at the northern end of the beach. This area is larger and more visible, compared to the smaller and secluded southern end of the beach. I spent the majority of the time seated here, and took a few walks down to the southern end to observe and collect materials for weaving. As a result, I have fewer observations at the beach's southern end.

### Observing Human Parkgoers

Beginning at the lower beach tier, the site reading lent me valuable experience and information about DB Park. First, I saw where most people at DB Park relaxed within this tier of the park. At the northern, sandy portion of the beach, people sunbathed - often nude - or dipped into the water. They usually came alone, but sometimes in pairs. For those that wanted more privacy, the southern strip of beach offered greater seclusion because it was narrower and buffered by tall shrubbery. **Figures 5.7 and 5.8** show the northern and southern ends of the beach, respectively. Parkgoers would sometimes strike up conversations with each other or enjoy the beach alone. Some fully clothed people would walk through the park, although most did not stay long. A few nude parkgoers also inquired about my project as I wove on the beach. Since I mainly attended the park in the Winter, I didn't experience it during the peak Summer season. However, there were rarely times when I was alone. Sunny days saw the most parkgoers, but even in overcast weather, folks would come and enjoy DB Park's beach. The atmosphere was relaxed, quiet, and peaceful, with parkgoers seemingly keeping to themselves or having pleasant conversations with other attendees. Overall, I interpreted the beach as a space where people wanted options to gather, socialize, be alone, sunbathe and swim, and relax.

The beach tier had traces of former human activity, including a scattering of trash (not more so than is present at other Seattle parks and beaches I've attended), charred wood (perhaps indicating some beach fires at the park, or wood that floated from parks nearby), and graffiti on an interior wall (typical for many Seattle parks). Having participated in one of FoDB's beach cleanups, I witnessed ways community members also tended the park by removing trash and invasive blackberries.

### Observing More-Than-Human Parkgoers

The park was also enjoyed by an array of more-than-human users. I observed geese and ducks feeding at the beach, diving water birds offshore in Lake Washington, bald eagles flying overhead, western honey bees pollinating willow trees, and a mix of native and non-native vegetation as seen in **Figure 5.7**. Many of the plants along the beach were thorny (either blackberry or rose bushes), and likely uncomfortable for parkgoers to lean against while sunbathing.

### Personal Reflections

Spending time at DB Park's beach also gave me appreciation for the beauty of this 2-acre park. I saw stunning views of Mt. Rainier to the South, witnessed calm and clear lake waters, and basked in the warmth of the afternoon sun. **Figure 5.9** shows my woven interpretation of the lakeside. Also, being on crutches for part of this project revealed how inaccessible the park is, as I had to take stairs or walk on slippery grass to access the lower tier. Overall, the park gave me a sense of tranquility and happiness, and I gained greater understanding for queer parkgoers' love for DB Park and desire to protect this unique space.

### Takeaways

Taken together, my site reading of this tier taught me where and how parkgoers may use the beach for sunbathing on its sandy tier, ways in which shrubbery along the central and southern edge offers a privacy barrier and shade, and indications of the rich biodiversity that enjoys this tier of the park. These considerations for gathering, solitude, accessibility, and biodiversity carried forward into future phases of design.






**Figure 5.7:** Site Reading Lower Tier, A. This portion of the frame was focused on the northern end of the beach.




**Figure 5.8:** Site Reading Lower Tier, B. This portion of the frame was focused on the southern end of the beach.




**Figure 5.9:** Site Reading Lower Tier, C. This portion of the frame was focused on lake experiences/observations.

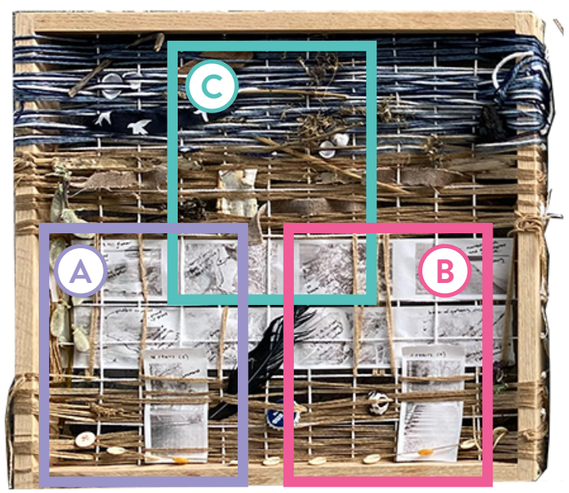



**Figure 5.10:** Site Reading Lower Tier, Key. A key for detailed images of areas A, B, and C on the lower tier frame.

## MIDDLE TIER / FRAME 2

For the middle tier, I seated myself next to the center of the park's large retaining wall. I had open views of both the northern and southern portions of the tier from this seat. When I wasn't weaving, I walked up and down the expanse of the tier to observe and collect materials.

### Observing Human Parkgoers

Similarly to the lower tier, parkgoers used the middle tier for sunbathing, sometimes in the nude. Fewer parkgoers used this level compared to the lower level, but more used this space than the upper tier. This reduced usage may have been due to parkgoers' preference for proximity to the water, preference for laying on sand, or better views of the lake granted on the lower tier. The grass leading parkgoers' down to the beach was essentially trodden to dirt and collected pools of water in the rain, revealing paths most frequently used by parkgoers on their way to the beach. The southern end of this tier is secluded, being narrower with tall surrounding shrubbery. I only once saw a parkgoer sunbathing toward the tier's southern end.

### Observing More-Than-Human Parkgoers

**Figure 5.15** shows conventional site analysis of existing vegetation at DB Park. This information was bolstered by insight gained from site reading. This tier was primarily grass lawn, with a Nootka Rose/Himalayan Blackberry screen to the beach and two areas of more eclectic plantings located in Planting Zone 4 and 5. **Figure 5.12** offers a glimpse into the Rose/Blackberry thicket on site, while **Figure 5.13** contains a materials from the diverse plant species' found on the tiers' northern end. Alongside the staircase was a mix of three kinds of mint, and two native plants - Mahonia aquifolium (Tall Oregon Grape) and Tellima grandiflora (Fragrant Fringecup). Along the northern wall, plants including Origanum vulgare (Oregano) and Borago officinalis (Borage) were also planted, along with native Amelanchier alnifolia (Western Serviceberry) and Rosa nootkana (Nootka Rose). I assume that the mint, oregano, and borage were planted by parkgoers rather than City staff since I don't frequently see these plants incorporated into shoreline plant palettes. This planting mix may indicate an interest in herbal plants, sensory (gustatory/edible and olfactory/pleasant smelling) plants, and native plants in DB Park. A planting schedule provided by FoDB also shows an extensive list of groundcovers and flowering perennials in Planting Zone 3. I didn't see any of these plants, but I also wasn't spending time on site when many would be in bloom. However, this list indicates a strong preference for a native and visually vibrant planting palette. Small birds also flitted through the foliage between the lower and middle tier, and geese seen in **Figure 5.11** fed (and pooped) on this grassy level.

### Personal Reflections

Compared to the lower tier, the middle tier felt a bit less exciting or inviting. If I were to go to DB Park to relax, I would go all the way down to the beach rather than stay on this grassy level. The tall bulkhead wall and abatement fence made this level feel divided from the upper level of the beach, and led me to imagine ways these dividers could be removed in DB Park redesigns. However, I imagine the shade this tier provides may be more welcome during the summer, and grass may be more comfortable for some to sit on than sand. Having options for shade and seating were also considerations for future designs. Additionally, this tier has a larger open space for gathering, which appears to be filled during summer months as shown in **Figure 5.16** through Google Earth aerial images.

### Takeaways

My site reading of the middle tier revealed opportunities to enhance planting for visual interest and tactile comfort, while maintaining dense vegetation for privacy on the beach tier. Additionally, continuing with a native planting palette for the park would support more-than-human biodiversity in the area. I wanted to keep the area fairly open for sunbathing during the summer, while also having some options for shade. Last, removing the retaining wall and abatement fence would increase connectivity to the upper tier, and create options for more accessible pathways.






**Figure 5.11:** Site Reading Middle Tier, A. This portion of the frame was focused on the northern end of the lawn.




**Figure 5.12:** Site Reading Middle Tier, B. This portion of the frame was focused on the southern end of the lawn.




**Figure 5.13:** Site Reading Middle Tier, C. This portion of the frame was focused on vegetation on the northern end of the site.

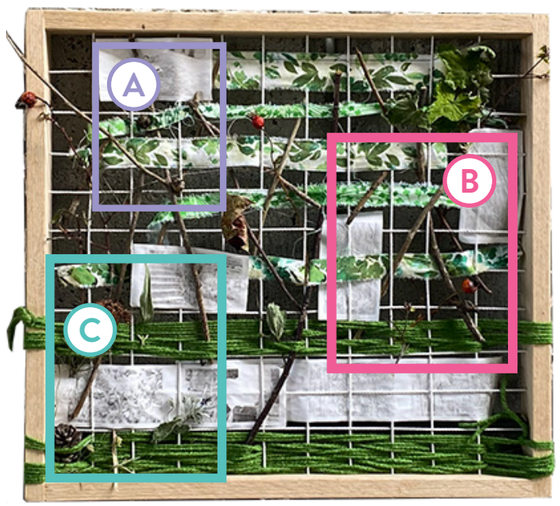
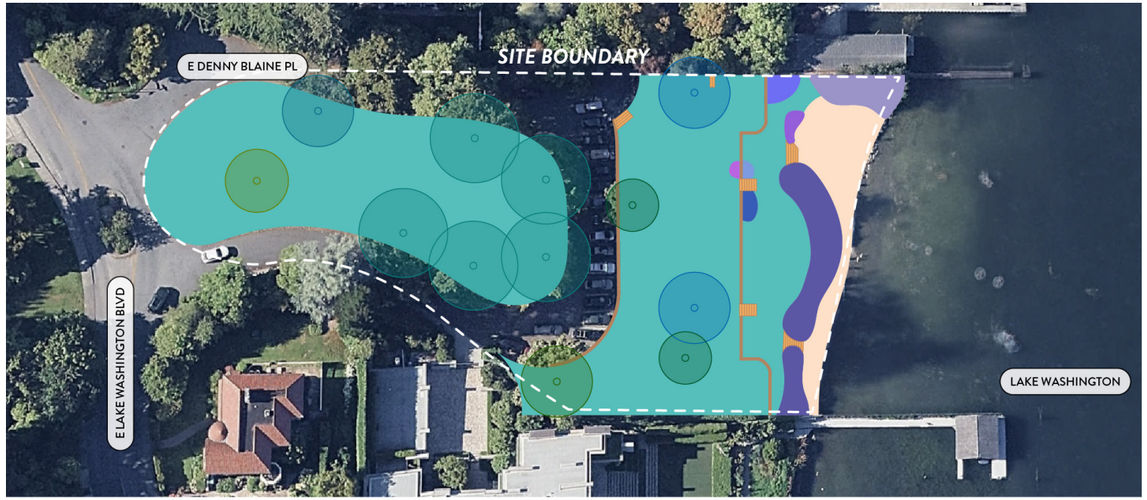



**Figure 5.14:** Site Reading Middle Tier, Key. A key for detailed images of areas A, B, and C on the middle tier frame.




## PLANTING ZONE 1

*Salix discolor / Pussy Willow*
*Crataegus douglasii / Black Hawthorne*
*Rosa nutkana / Nootka Rose*
*Melissa officinalis / Lemon Balm
*Conyza canadensis / Horseweed*
Tanacetum parthenium / Feverfew

## PLANTING ZONE 2

Verbascum thapsus / Common Mullein
Erodium moschatum / Musky Stork's Bill
*Conyza canadensis / Horseweed*
*Rosa nutkana / Nootka Rose*
*Melissa officinalis / Lemon Balm

## PLANTING ZONE 4

Pinus sp. / Pine Tree
Conyza canadensis / Horseweed
Leucanthemum superbum / Shasta Daisy
*Rosa nutkana / Nootka Rose*
*Origanum vulgare / Oregano
*Borago officinalis / Borage
*Amelanchier alnifolia / Western Serviceberry*

## PLANTING ZONE 3

*Rosa nutkana / Nootka Rose*
*Rubus parviflorus / Thimbleberry*
*Cornus sericea / Red Osier Dogwood*
Dicranum scoparium / Broom Forkmoss
*Melissa officinalis / Lemon Balm
Geranium molle / Dove's Foot
*Rubus bifrons / Himalayan Blackberry*
*Hedera helix/ English Ivy*
*Symphoricarpos albus / Snowberry*
Cardamine hirsuta / Hairy bittercress
Scirpus microcarpus / Wood Club Rush
*Juncus effusus / Common Rush*
Acer palmatum / Japanese Maple
*Mahonia aquifolium / Tall Oregon Grape*
Prunus laurocerasus / Cherry laurel

## PLANTING ZONE 5

*Mentha longifolia / Horsemint
*Mentha spicata / Spearmint
*Mentha suaveolens / Apple Mint
*Mahonia aquifolium / Tall Oregon Grape*
*Tellima grandiflora / Fragrant Fringecup*
Forsythia x intermedia / Border Forsythia
Conyza canadensis / Horseweed

## PLANTING ZONE 6

*Rubus parviflorus / Thimbleberry*
Geranium molle / Dove's Foot
Erodium moschatum / Musky Stork's Bill
Tanacetum parthenium / Feverfew

## PLANTING ZONE 7

Rosa chinensis / China Rose

Conyza canadensis / Horseweed
**Achillea millefeolium / Common Yarrow*
**Allium cernuum / Nodding onion*
**Camassia quamash / Common camas*
**Fragaria chiloensis / Beach strawberry*
**Fritillaria lanceolata / Chocolate Lily*
**Penstemon serrulatus / Cascade Penstemon*
**Symphyotrichum subspicatum / Douglas aster*
**Viola adunca / Prairie Violet*
**Holodiscus discolor / Oceanspray*
**Philadelphus lewisii / Mock Orange*
**Ribes sanguineum / Red flowering currant*
**Spirea betulifolia / White Spirea
**Arbutus menziesii / Pacific Madrone*

## LARGE TREES

Betula pendula / Silver Birch
Tilia cordata / Littleleaf Linden
Tilia americana / American Linden
Cryptomeria japonica / Japanese Cedar
Prunus x pugetensis / Cherry Hybrid
Betula sp. / Birch Tree

*Blue text = PNW native plant*
*Purple text = noxious weed in WA State*
** = edible or herb*
*** = plants listed on a planting plan provided by FoDB. I was not able to locate these plants***





















Left: **Figure 5.15:** Existing Vegetation and Planting Zones at DB Park. The map and plant list above are those observed or indicated by FoDB to be present on site. Many are native, some are invasive, and others are edible/herbal. Aerial Image Source: "Google Earth", July 2024.

Above: **Figure 5.16:** DB Park Usage Over Time. These images show where parkgoers tend to spend time at DB Park. The lower and middle tier appear to be most frequently utilized, with the upper tier less frequently occupied by sunbathers aside from more crowded sunny days. Source: "Google Earth", November 2007, August 2011, May 2013, May 2018, April 2023, July 2024.

## UPPER TIER / FRAME 3

For the upper tier, I seated myself beneath the canopy of a Japanese Cedar. It was raining the day I did my frame weaving, so I used the tree for shelter. I still walked the entirety of the tier, but spent most time seated beneath the tree to stay dry.

### Observing Human Parkgoers

During all my visits to DB Park, I did not see any parkgoers laying down or relaxing on this tier, and only witnessed people walking through it to access the middle and lower levels. This suggests a preference for relaxing on the lower two tiers. I would speculate this decreased usage was partially due to the presence of the abatement fence, rules against nudity, and surveillance by cameras and private security making this tier less appealing to parkgoers. **Figure 5.17** shows the abatement fence and restrictive signage present on this tier. Parkgoers perceived the fence, rules, and surveillance as threats to belonging in DB Park, elaborated upon later in this chapter (see "Survey and Interviews" in Chapter 5).

### Observing More-Than-Human Parkgoers

Compared to the middle and lower tier, DB Park's upper tier felt the most tree-dominant and shaded. Five mature, large trees are present: two Betula pendula (Silver Birch), two Cryptomeria japonica (Japanese Cedar), and one Tilia cordata (Littleleaf Linden). Materials from these trees can be seen in **Figure 5.19**. According to a representative from FoDB, the northern birch is diseased and should likely be removed. Trees were the most prominent vegetation on this tier. Other more-than-humans I witnessed were crows, who rested in the boughs of the trees.

### Personal Reflections

While on this tier, I felt the presence of the abatement fence most starkly. Since I wanted to face the water, the fence was always in my vision, and blocked much of the view from this tier. Signage detailing the division in clothing-required and clothing-optional areas was highly visible, along with other park regulations. The fence was unattractive and detracted from my experience.

The upper tier also felt highly visible from the parking lot and neighboring houses. I often had a perception of being watched by Stuart Sloan's security guard, who sat in a vehicle with direct views of the park ("Denny Blaine Park for All" 2026, 1).

Although the tier itself was visible, the entry to the park - seen in **Figure 5.18** - was not. The first time I visited the park, its northern entryway was not intuitive at a glance. I would often walk over the curb at the park's southern end for easier access. Entering the park requires one to either hop a curb or go down stairs, making the park challenging to access for those with mobility impairments. The formal entry is also adjacent to the park's one Porta Potty. The grass leading down from the entrance was downtrodden to dirt, making a muddy puddle near the restroom on rainy days. The stairs, mud, and temporary restroom all highlighted a need for safe, accessible, permanent restrooms.

### Takeaways

Site reading primarily revealed the upper tier as a space for tree coverage and shade, qualities I planned on preserving and carrying forward into future park designs. The beauty, size, and prominence of trees on this tier also motivated me to preserve them in redesigns. I also planned on addressing the perception of surveillance present in this tier through some type of buffer between the parking lot and lawn area. Removing the abatement fence - a decision favored by the vast majority of parkgoers (see "Survey and Interviews" in Chapter 5) - also felt imperative in future designs, as the fence highly disrupts park culture and visuals. Making the tier nude-friendly and incorporating welcoming, affirmational signage were also strategies to make this tier feel safer and inviting. Last, creating a more distinguished and ADA accessible entrance to the park offered a way to visually and physically welcome parkgoers of all ability levels into the space.






**Figure 5.17:** Site Reading Upper Tier, A. This portion of the frame was focused on the abatement fence and restrictive signage.




**Figure 5.18:** Site Reading Upper Tier, B. This portion of the frame was focused on the park's main entry and amenities.




**Figure 5.19:** Site Reading Upper Tier, C. This portion of the frame was focused on trees and site features along the western edge.

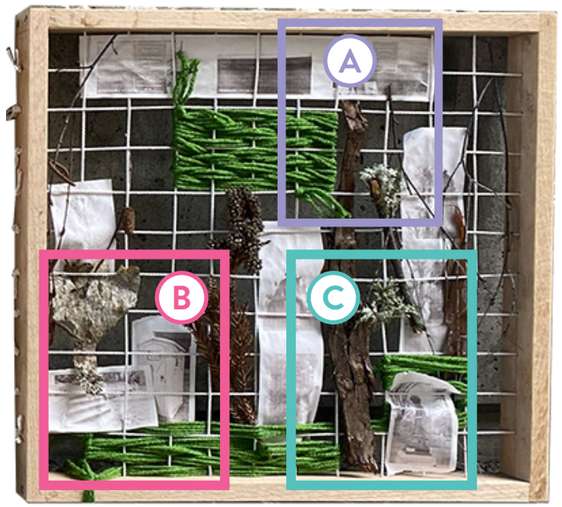



**Figure 5.20:** Site Reading Upper Tier, Key. A key for detailed images of areas A, B, and C on the upper tier frame.

## Site Reading Takeaways

I practiced site reading as a method of queer collectivism and multiplicity. I hoped to spend more time on-site than is typical for conventional site analysis methods in order to develop more personal attachments to the landscape, its inhabitants, and its significance as a space for safe and free self-expression. Through the process of weaving, I also was more attuned to the beings and materials around me, and how what I chose to include or omit in my frames revealed my perceptions about significant site qualities or elements. While I did not include the presence of humans in the frames, physically being in DB Park for an extended duration allowed me to gain valuable insight that I don't believe would have been possible from conventional site analysis.

This was my first attempt at a queer site reading methodology, so I do believe this process had shortcomings. As previously mentioned, the way I chose to place materials in the frame was largely dictated by their actual location on-site. Should I redo this process, I would put more thought into where and why I placed materials in different locations, to try and illuminate or juxtapose relationships between beings present on-site. Additionally, I would have liked to have more time weaving the middle and upper tier frames. Since I only spent 1.5-3 hours on these frames, compared to roughly 7-8 hours for the beach tier, I believe my observations and connections were not as rich. Last, I would have spent more time finding ways to incorporate human presence and actions on-site. Although I would not include photographs of parkgoers to maintain privacy, I could have used fabrics or found materials more creatively to represent inhabitants and users. Still, I believe my site reading was a preliminary attempt at a queering of conventional design methods, and allowed me to have greater appreciation for the multiplicity of beings present on-site, the ways they used the site, the importance of the landscape itself, and created a sense of connection between myself and these entities.

A summary of takeaways for the next stages of design to be explored in Chapter 6 is listed below. **Figure 5.21** visually depicts these conclusions.

### Lower Tier

- Gathering: The northern end of the beach was more visible, and where I saw more parkgoers going to sunbathe. I planned to maintain this space for gathering and sunbathing in DB Park redesigns.
- Solitude: The southern end of the beach was more secluded due to vegetation. I planned to maintain this space for solitude.
- Queer Planting Design and Participation: The vegetation on this tier offered humans privacy and shade, and offered more-than-humans such as birds and bees valuable food and shelter. I planned to maintain vegetation to support human and more-than-human use, and propose stewardship practices such as the landscaping parties by FoDB to support reciprocity between humans and more-than-humans. Vegetation would include a queer and native plant palette.
- Accessibility: Accessing the beach required stairs. I planned to improve accessibility for users of all ability levels in DB Park redesigns.

### Middle Tier

- Gathering and Solitude: Like the lower tier, I saw the middle tier used by parkgoers for sunbathing. Continuing to use this space for sunbathing alone or with others was a consideration for proposed DB Park redesigns.
- Queer Planting Design and Participation: This tier included a mix of native plants and non-native herbs that I believe were likely planted by parkgoers. I planned on incorporating a native and queer plant palette in the redesigns, and having opportunities for parkgoers to participate by planting their own queer/native vegetation.
- Material Reuse: The retaining wall and abatement fence made this middle tier feel divided from the upper tier. Exploring ways to remove and reuse the stones and fence materials was incorporated in DB Park redesigns.
- Accessibility: Like the lower tier, accessing the middle tier required stairs. I planned to improve accessibility in DB Park redesigns.

### Upper Tier

- Material Reuse: I did not see any parkgoers using this tier, beyond passing through to the beach, during my site readings and visits. Community engagement with parkgoers described later in this chapter revealed the abatement fence, neighbors, cameras, and private security to be perceived threats to queerness and belonging at DB Park. These forces felt most apparent in the upper tier due to heightened visibility and clothing requirements from the fence. As a result, I planned to remove and transform the retaining wall and fence into features supportive rather than restrictive of belonging in future DB Park redesigns.
- Gathering and Solitude: Since this tier felt heavily surveilled both from my personal experience and community insight (see "Safety, Threats, and Resistance" in Chapter 5), I planned to incorporate taller screening plants to offer a privacy and protective buffer for this tier.
- Queer Planting Design: This tier had several large, mature trees. To recognize and respect the presence of these beings through queer multiplicity, I preserved these trees (aside from the dying northern birch) in future DB Park redesigns.
- Learning and Affirmational Signage: The existing signage on this tier restricted parkgoers' bodily freedom by prohibiting nudity. I planned to incorporate signage that informed and affirmed parkgoers' right to be nude throughout the park as a means of supporting belonging.

As previously stated, site analysis centered values of multiplicity and collectivism to create more personal connection with the beings and ways of being at DB Park. While this method was valuable and lent the takeaways shown above, this was only a piece of my community engagement methodology for DB Park. Through site reading, I primarily engaged with more-than-humans on-site, and was able to observe parkgoers' use of the space. However, in order to answer the question of "what do community members want or need in DB Park?", I needed to learn directly from parkgoers themselves. Site reading lent me a few hours of valuable observation and connection to DB Park. However, parkgoers have spent countless hours using, enjoying, claiming, adapting, connecting to, and protecting DB Park. In order to create a design that supported queerness and queer belonging in space, I needed to center the expertise and knowledge of queer community members. Through a process of surveying and interviewing, I sought to learn and apply the insights of parkgoers in order to create DB Park's reimagined futures. Takeaways from site reading, the survey, and interviews were used in tandem with those from precedent studies to envision the redesigns of DB Park explored in Chapter 6.

# SURVEY AND INTERVIEWS

## Purpose

In order to learn what (human) community members wanted or needed in Denny Blaine Park, I conducted a survey and interviews with self-identified queer adults who either visited or were interested in attending DB Park. Twenty-five self-identified queer community members completed the survey, and six completed both the survey and a follow-up interview. Respondents were limited to individuals 18 years or older due to IRB restrictions that relate to research conducted with minors. While not included in this thesis, the perspectives of those under 18 years old is significant in guiding the future of DB Park, and should be accounted for in real-world designs.

I limited the survey and interviews to queer-identified people so that this thesis could be used by queer community members in conversations with non-queer stakeholders, neighbors, city officials, and others. My hope is that the reimagined park designs proposed in this thesis can be a starting point to open discussions on real-world improvements to DB Park.

## Methods

The survey and interview included five of the same categories: 1. Demographics Questions; 2. Connection to Seattle and Denny Blaine Park; 3. Looking Toward the Future; 4. Existing Proposals; 5. Participating in Follow-up. The interview included one additional category called "Queer Belonging and Queer Space." Survey and interview questions are listed in Appendix A. The categories are elaborated on below:

- Demographics Questions: The purpose of this category was to have some information that would contextualize participants' responses, since our identities influence our experiences and perceptions of space. This category included questions about gender identity, sexual orientation, age, race/ethnicity, income, and disability relating to recreation spaces.
- Connection to Seattle and Denny Blaine Park: The purpose of this category was to get a general understanding of who, when, and how DB Park is used by parkgoers. This category inquired about

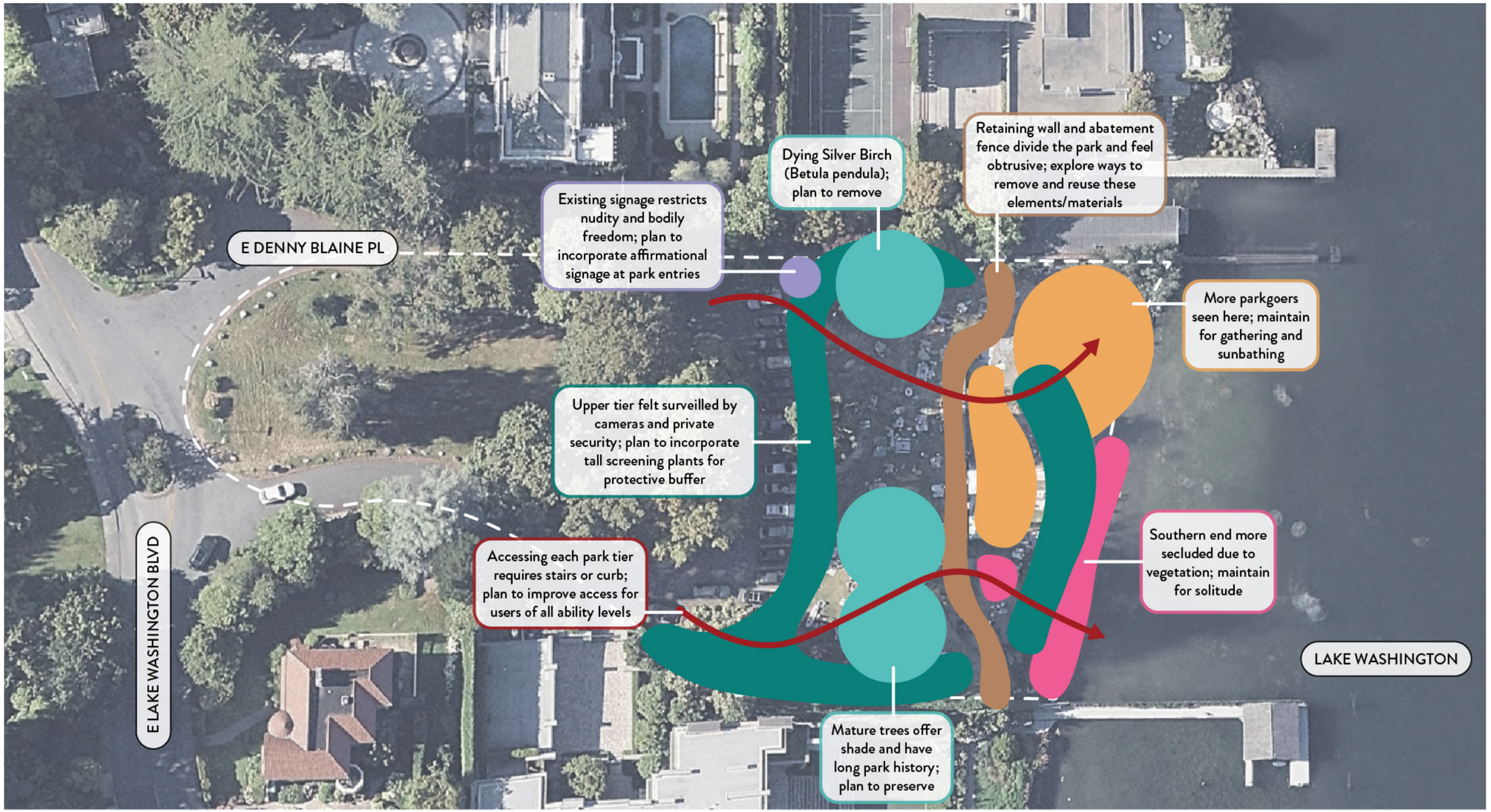



**Figure 5.21:** Site Reading Takeaways. A summary of key takeaways to consider for DB Park's redesign based upon lessons from site reading. Included are proposals for programming, material reuse, vegetation, signage, and accessibility. Aerial Image Source: "Google Earth", July 2024.

participants' access, usage, and perceptions of DB Park. Questions included ages participants started using the park, frequency of attendance, time of attendance, access to the park, activities at the park, perceptions of surveillance, and perceptions of diversity at DB Park.

- Looking Toward the Future: The purpose of this category was to learn whether or not participants wanted DB Park to change, and their ideal vision for a queer recreation space. This category included mainly open-ended questions.
- Existing Proposals: The purpose of this category was to learn what existing proposals for DB Park participants would want incorporated in the future. This category included a non-exhaustive list of proposed changes to DB Park. I created the list from a range of ideas put forth by community members, FoDB, Denny Blaine Park for All, and the City of Seattle. Participants were asked to rank whether or not they would want each proposal.
- Queer Belonging and Queer Space: This category was only included in interviews, because these questions were open-ended and intended for longer responses. The purpose was to learn about participants' experiences and sense of belonging in queer spaces and in DB Park. Questions included asking participants about their definitions of belonging and queer space, the importance of queer space, and their experiences of belonging at DB Park. Several of these questions were adapted directly from Jessica Bonner's thesis on queer urbanism in Seattle, where she conducted several interviews about queerness and queer belonging (Bonner 2024, 38-39).
- Participating in Follow-up: This category asked participants whether or not they'd like to be contacted for a second round of engagement to evaluate my early designs for DB Park. Unfortunately due to time constraints, I was unable to contact participants for follow-up during this thesis.

Survey and interview questions underwent several rounds of evaluation prior to IRB submission. As previously mentioned, the initial conversations I had with two queer community members led to some edits including the inclusion of questions around surveillance. My thesis committee also greatly assisted in question formation and refinement. Once questions were finalized, I applied and received IRB approval from the University of Washington to conduct this study.

## Survey and Interview Sampling

To connect with queer-identified folks for the survey and interviews, I created flyers for physical and virtual distribution. The flyer can be found in Appendix B. I conducted outreach through three main avenues: 1. posting flyers at local businesses frequented by queer patrons; 2. posting flyers through personal networks; 3. outreach to community organizations and groups. I posted flyers at queer businesses including Charlie's Queer Books in Fremont, Elliott Bay Books in Capitol Hill, and Caffe Vita in Capitol Hill. These locations were chosen because I believe they are viewed as social third spaces for queer folks and I was personally familiar with them. I additionally posted fliers at DB Park. However, the DB Park flyers were removed by an unknown party within three days of posting.

I also shared flyers through my personal networks, including the two parkgoers with whom I had informal meetings. Both offered to distribute flyers over their social media accounts. A classmate also posted at a queer line dancing event they regularly attend. The third avenue of outreach included connecting with FoDB, and another local Seattle organization, Queer the Land (QTL). I chose to contact FoDB for flyer distribution because they have a large following of DB parkgoers and existing social media channels for outreach. When I contacted FoDB, they offered to post the flyer on their social media accounts. Due to the uptick in responses after FoDB's post, many of the respondents likely learned of this project through FoDB, compared with my other sampling methods and locations.

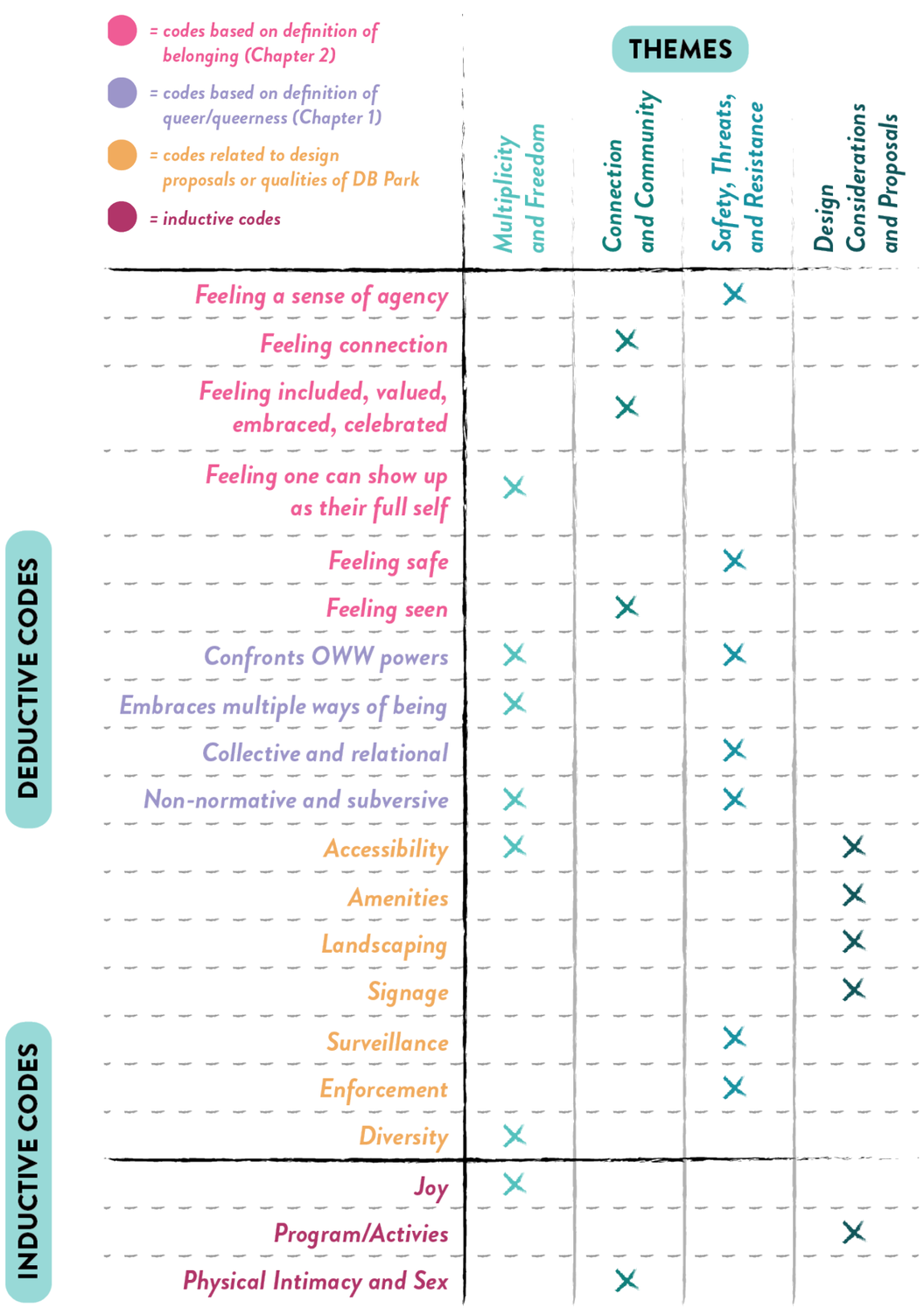
In recognizing the ways in which academia and queer-oriented spaces have historically privileged the perspectives of White/gay/cisgender people, I wanted to collaborate with the diverse array of parkgoers who use, shape, and enjoy DB Park. I therefore chose to contact QTL, a Queer, transgender, Two-Spirit Black/Indigenous/people of color (QT2BIPOC) cooperative focused on land ownership with goals of creating a communal space including transitional housing, a co-working space, a venue space, and a community garden (Queer the Land n.d.). As a queer land-oriented group based in relative proximity to DB Park (a 20 minute drive or 30 minute bike ride), I thought QTL may have had members affiliated with DB Park. After a virtual meeting with a QTL organizer, I sent the organization a flier for outreach. I also offered QTL-affiliated participants $15 for a completed survey or $25 for interviews. I offered compensation due to the lack of reciprocity often performed in academic research settings, particularly with QT2BIPOC identified individuals who share their knowledge yet receive little in return from researchers. I did not offer survey or interview respondents contacted through other outreach methods compensation due to my limited funds. However, there were no requests for compensation by participants, and only one participant identified as BIPOC in the survey/interview responses. My outreach efforts failed to connect with folks from diverse racial backgrounds. This resulted in an overrepresentation of White parkgoers participating in the study. Any future and real-world projects about DB Park must make specific efforts to include, incorporate, and act upon the wants and wishes of QT2BIPOC parkgoers. Particularly since people with intersectional and marginalized identities face greater threats from surveillance and enforcement in public queer spaces, centering their perspectives is crucial to meaningfully support queer belonging in DB Park.

My methods of survey and interview sampling had significant limitations. In posting flyers, I only left them at businesses/third spaces I was personally familiar with. Due to my limited time spent at queer spaces in Seattle, particularly those outside of north Seattle or Capitol Hill, I likely did not flyer spaces frequented by queer community members in the greater Seattle area. Additionally, my limited connection with QT2BIPOC land-oriented groups in Seattle greatly reduced my outreach to BIPOC parkgoers. After undertaking surveys and interviews, I also came to realize how DB Park is an important space of belonging for houseless community members. Based on participant demographics, I believe houseless parkgoers were underrepresented in the survey or interviews for this study. Last, since parkgoers under 18 years old were not included, the insights of queer youth were not incorporated into DB Park redesigns. Given ways in which queer spaces historically and presently exclude queer people with marginalized identities including those who are BIPOC, houseless, and/or youth, the needs, interests, and desires of community members with these intersectional identities must be centered to support belonging in real-world DB Park redesigns. I should have dedicated more time and reciprocity in order to connect and collaborate with these community members, and my failure to do so is a significant limitation on the designs proposed for this thesis. Given its limitations, the time, knowledge, and expertise of the community members who participated is invaluable and necessary in reimagining DB Park. What is needed for DB Park's future is continued and extensive collaboration, ideation, and ingenuity among the diverse multiplicity of users at DB Park. The limitations described here, and hopes for queer futures, are elaborated upon in Chapter 7.

## Findings

After concluding the survey and interviews, I worked to analyze and learn from the data. My analysis was informed by qualitative and quantitative research methods. I began by transcribing each of the interviews with participants from audio to text. The first transcription was entirely manual. However, due to time constraints and the volume of interviews, I transcribed the remaining interviews with "TurboScribe," a free online transcription software. After the recording was transcribed, I listened back to the audio to catch any errors TurboScribe made in interviews.

After transcription was completed, I studied the interview responses and survey open-responses through a process of deductive and inductive coding. These results were then paired with analysis of numerical data from the survey to reach overall conclusions. Coding can be understood as organizing data into "'chunks' that are alike," where each chunk is a code or "short phrase that represents the essence or key attribute of narrative/verbal information" (Bradley et al. 2015, 1:40, 2:14). As interviews are "coded," key quotes are placed into codes or used to form new codes. As a result, key similarities, differences, and themes begin to emerge within these chunks of code. Two conventional approaches to coding exist: deductive and inductive coding. For deductive coding, codes are created prior to data analysis based on prior research conducted by the researcher ("QUALitative Research & Tools" 2026). This method benefits from having a starting point to work off of, rather than starting from scratch ("QUALitative Research & Tools" 2026). For inductive coding, codes emerge from the interviews and analysis itself ("QUALitative Research & Tools" 2026). This method allows researchers to have fewer preconceived ideas and greater flexibility in coding data






("QUALitative Research & Tools" 2026; Bradley et al. 2015). As this was my first time coding qualitative data, I chose to begin with deductive coding based on my research on belonging, queerness, and design proposals of DB Park, and add codes inductively as they emerged during the process. The deductive codes and inductive codes are shown in **Figure 5.22**, with code descriptions in **Appendix C**'s code book. After coding the first two interviews, I added the inductive codes "Joy" and "Program/Activities" as they emerged from the data. Once I had coded all of the interviews, I additionally added the final inductive code "Physical Intimacy and Sex" shown in **Figure 5.22**, then went back through each transcript to highlight wherever it was mentioned. This code arose due to its repeated appearance across several conversations with parkgoers.

In order to code data, I read through interview transcripts and survey responses, highlighted portions of the text, and attached codes to these pieces of the transcripts/responses. One piece of text could be given multiple codes. For instance, one parkgoer stated during an interview that DB Park feels like a queer space because "it feels like it's a little piece of the universe, and if the universe has, like, queer people and animals and energy then of course it has it in this tiny little green space." I applied three codes to this quote: "feeling connection," "embraces multiple ways of being," and "collective and relational." Since the parkgoer is connecting DB Park's queerness to the broader queerness of the universe, people, animals, and energy, I qualified this as "feeling connection." For similar reasons, I felt this connection reflected a relationality between queer beings in DB Park, as they are all interrelated in their queerness. In discussing the multiple ways of being present at the park, including the landscape, humans, and more-than-humans, I coded it as "embraces multiple ways of being." I used this same strategy in applying the codes shown in **Figure 5.22** to each of the interview transcripts and survey responses.

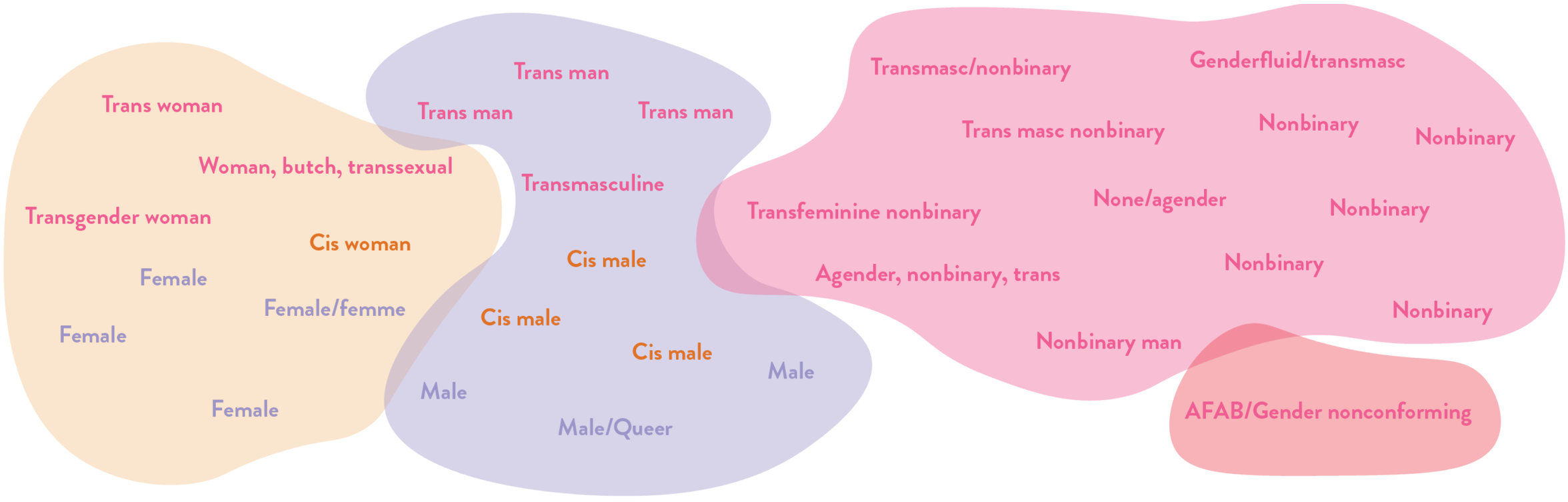
Quantitative results were not coded, but were associated with related qualitative data. For instance, demographic data about participants including age, race/ethnicity, and ability level were directly related to codes "diversity" and "embraces multiple ways of being." When asked about perceptions of surveillance at DB Park, quantitative responses were associated with codes "feeling safe" and "surveillance." Pairing qualitative and quantitative data lent individual perspectives and larger-scale trends about DB Park than would be possible with either method alone.

After coding qualitative data and studying the quantitative results from surveys, I categorized related codes and data into the four themes: Multiplicity and Freedom; Connection and Community; Safety, Threats, and Resistance; and Design Considerations and Proposals. These themes were intended to reflect the key insights that parkgoers shared about DB Park and their experiences of queer belonging and space.

## Analysis

After completing and reviewing interview and survey codes, four key themes arose. These themes acted as the foundation for redesigns of DB Park. The themes identified were: Multiplicity and Freedom; Connection and Community; Safety, Threats, and Resistance; and Design Considerations and Proposals. Multiplicity and Freedom describes ways in which respondents felt DB Park was diverse and supported multiple ways of being, as well as ways in which the park was not supportive of multiplicity. Related was the feeling of freedom that arose for parkgoers in DB Park, as parkgoers felt they could be themselves, be free from OWW repression and othering, and find joy in freedom. Connection and Community describes ways DB Park fostered deep senses of connection between parkgoers themselves, and between parkgoers and the landscape. Safety, Threats, and Resistance reflected ways parkgoers valued safety at DB Park, perceived threats to queerness and queer safety in the park, and parkgoers' resistance to those threats. Last, Design Considerations and Proposals documented ways parkgoers use and enjoy the park, and gauged interest in changes to DB Park. The community insights gathered, grouped into these four themes, were the direct foundation for principles and program implemented in DB Park's redesigns, explored in Chapter 6. The four themes that arose from community engagement, their underlying codes, and their significance for DB Park's design are elaborated upon in the following sections.

**Figure 5.22:** Survey and Interview Codes. Codes were organized to derive four themes from community engagement with parkgoers.




**19 or 61%** respondents identified as **TGNB or non-cisgender**
**4 or 13%** respondents identified as **cisgender**
**8 or 26%** respondents identified as **female**
**10 or 32%** respondents identified as **male**
**12 or 39%** respondents identified as **nonbinary**
**1 or 3%** respondents identified as **gender nonconforming**

**Figure 5.23:** Participants' Gender Identities. Demographics for survey and interview participants hold a diverse multitude of gender identities.

## MULTIPLICITY AND FREEDOM

Multiplicity and Freedom encapsulates ways respondents perceived a presence and absence of multiplicity at DB Park. Multiplicity recognizes there is no one "right" way to exist, but rather many different ways (Escobar 2017, xvi, 15). Multiplicity includes the diverse identities parkgoers hold across gender/sexuality, age, race/ethnicity, ability level, and beyond. The theme also highlights how multiplicity lent to feelings of freedom at DB Park. "Multiplicity and Freedom" arose from analyzing the codes shown in **Figure 5.22**.

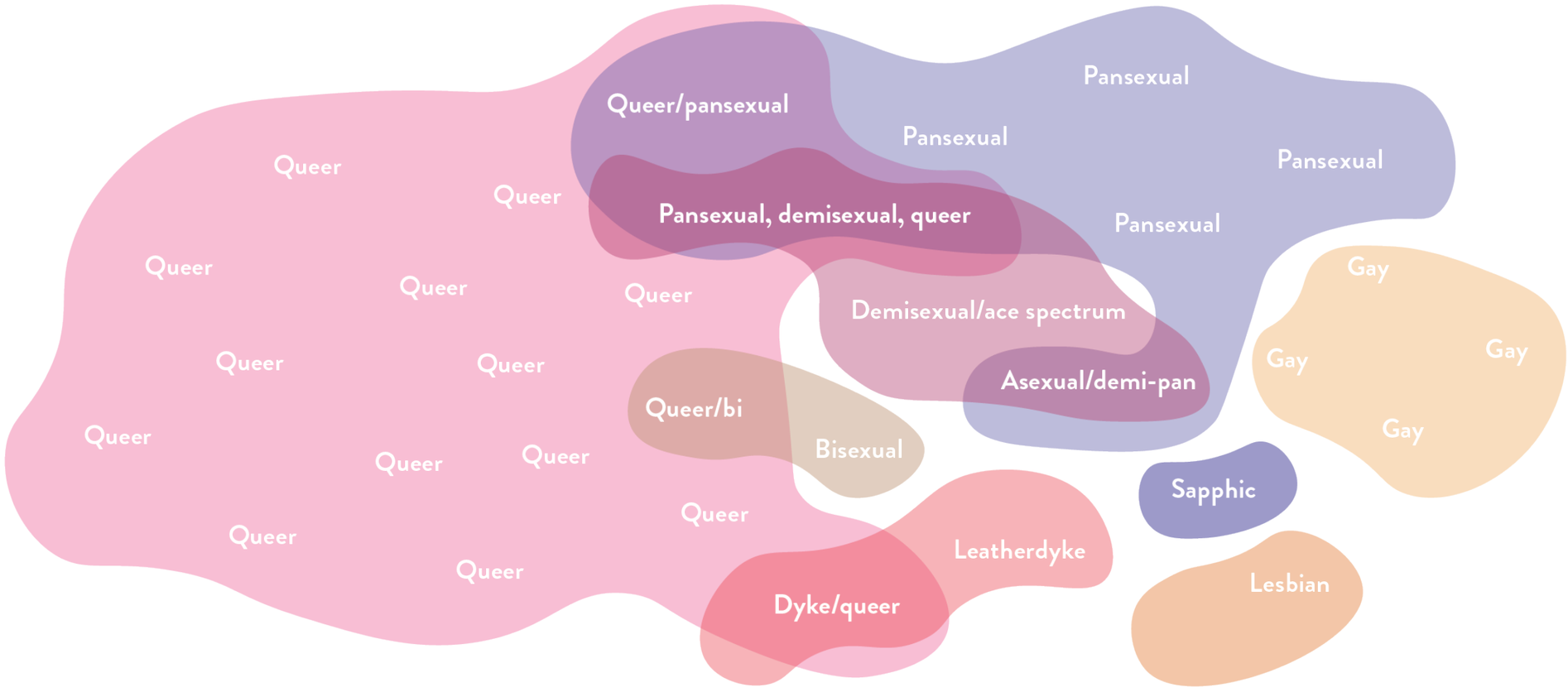
### Findings: Multiplicity

Multiplicity captures the ways that respondents perceived multiple ways of being at DB Park, as well as limits to this perceived diversity.

Participant Demographics

The respondents to the survey and interviews were fairly diverse in terms of gender identity (**Figure 5.23**), sexual orientation (**Figure 5.24**), income (**Figure 5.25**), disability (**Figure 5.25**), and duration in Seattle (**Figure 5.25**). Due to the specificity and significance of one's self-identifiers, gender and sexual identities in the original terms respondents used were not altered. The demographic percentages exceed 100% as participants identified with multiple identities. Diversity was also present in terms of sexual orientation. The breadth of gender and sexual expression amongst survey and interview respondents aligns with DB Park's historical and current usage as a popular and beloved queer space. The responses also indicate the importance of DP Park for TGNB parkgoers, a group within the queer community that faces particular stigma, harms, and persecution. To honor the 2SLGBTQIA+ diversity historically and presently in DB Park, I planned to include informational signage as a design consideration for this space.

The self-reported incomes of respondents were spread across income brackets with the greatest numbers earning less than $30,000, between $30,000 - $60,000, or between $90,000 - $120,000 annually.




**13** respondents identified as **queer**
**4** respondents identified as **pansexual**
**4** respondents identified as **gay**
**2** respondents identified as **demisexual/asexual**

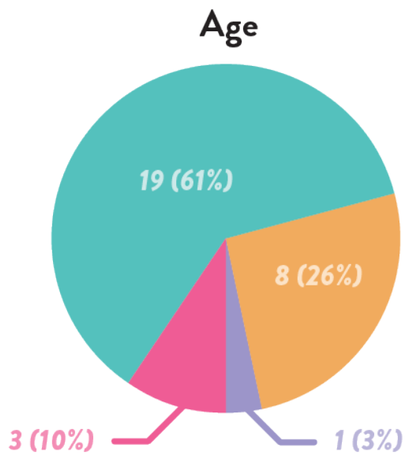
**1** respondent identified as:

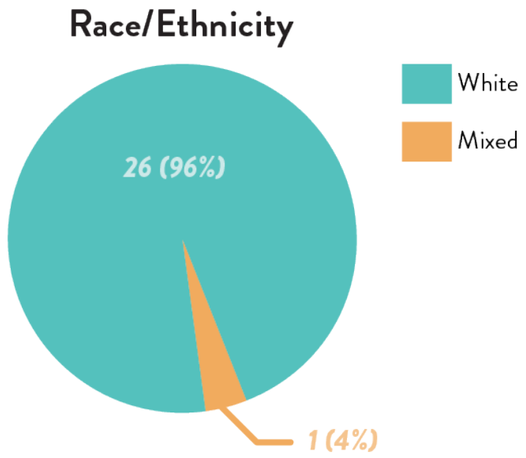
**Queer/bi**
**Pansexual, demisexual, queer**
**Dyke/queer**
**Queer/pansexual**
**Lesbian**
**Leatherdyke**
**Sapphic**
**Bisexual**

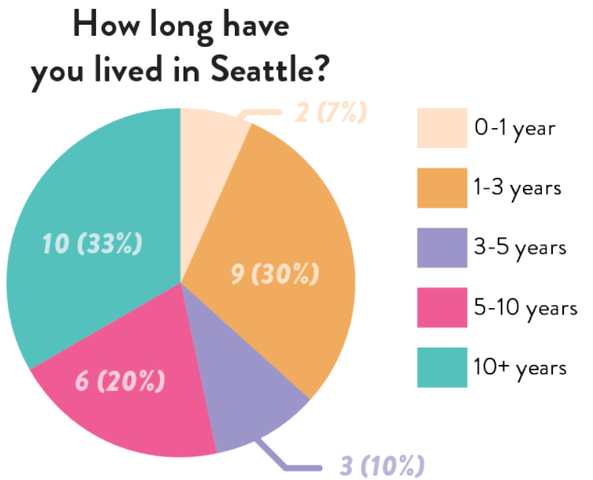
**Figure 5.24:** Participants' Sexual Orientations. Demographics for survey and interview participants hold a diverse multitude of sexual orientations.

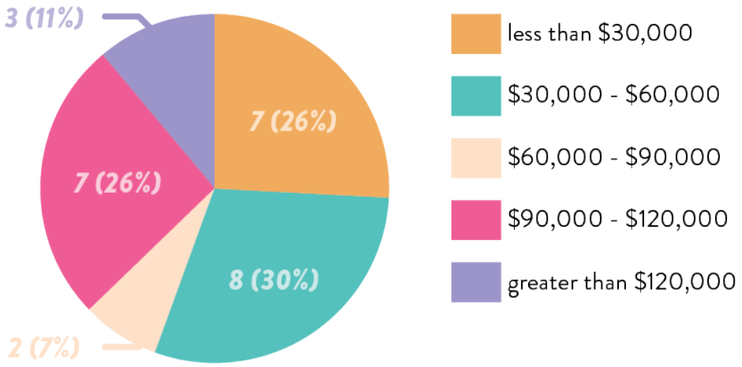
Incomes are shown in **Figure 5.25**. In total, most (56%) of the respondents earned less than $86,095, the 2024 per capita income of Seattle ("U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts," n.d.). This data indicates the park is accessible and utilized by those from a range of socioeconomic backgrounds. Socioeconomic diversity was reinforced in a survey response, where a parkgoer stated that "there are many community members that are low income and a few unhoused members" that utilize DB Park. Two other interviewees also mentioned DB Park as an important space for houseless neighbors; one of these parkgoers described how he was initially houseless when moving to Seattle from Texas, and emphasized how DB Park "meant a lot to [him] that it was there and that I could see a gay space and be with gay people." Including a range of mobility options including bicycles, scooters, buses, shuttles, and personal vehicles accessible to parkgoers across socioeconomic brackets and ability levels was important for DB Park's redesigns. Additionally, I planned to include amenities such as public showers, restrooms, and/or drinking fountains to support parkgoers of all income levels, with particular importance for those who may be unhoused.

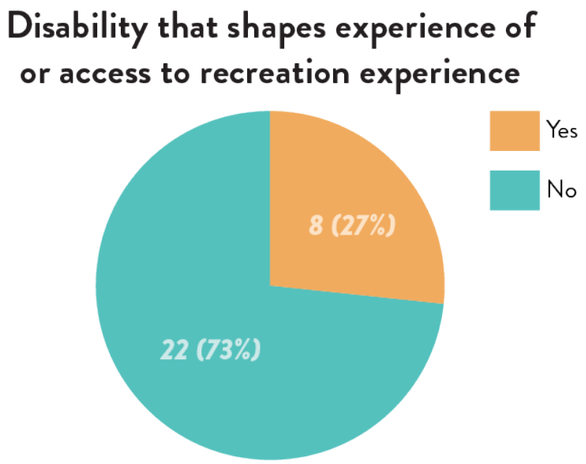
When asked if they have any disabilities that shape their experience of or access to outdoor recreation spaces, 27% or 8 participants said yes as shown in **Figure 5.25**. This percentage aligns closely to the national percentage of 28.7% of adults within the United States that have some type of disability (Center for Disease Control and Prevention, 2025). These responses included a parkgoer with PTSD describing the challenge they have finding a park where they can swim safely, yet having a sense of safety arising from queer community at DB Park. Another parkgoer with textile issues from neurodivergence described how "being naked is a big deal" that makes them feel normal, eases socializing with friends, and supports a sense of belonging. Several respondents described having disabilities that made traversing long trails and uneven footing an impediment. One one parkgoer stated their "recreation involves simply sitting outdoors, which is why I love Denny




"I've got ***textile issues from neurodivergence*** about clothing, and ***being naked is a big deal for me...*** for me it really helps for me to socialize and talk with my friends if I can socialize in a place where I don't have to wear clothing. And ***that's part of the sense of belonging.***"

"I have ***mobility issues*** (but I dont have a disabled parking pass), so parking near where I am going can be challenging. I always bring a chair. ***Most of my outdoor recreation involves simply sitting outdoors, which is why I love Denny Blaine!***"

**Figure 5.25:** Participant Demographics. This figure includes participants' demographics regarding age, income, duration in Seattle, race/ethnicity, and disability or ability level.

Blaine!" The experiences of these parkgoers reflects how DB Park is a valuable space of recreation and leisure for folks of all ability levels. Creating designs that are universally accessible, welcome nudity, and feel safe were important for DB Park.

In terms of how long respondents have resided in Seattle, parkgoers were evenly split from relative newcomers to more established Seattle residents as shown in **Figure 5.25**. Roughly a third of respondents have lived in the city for 1-3 years, a third for 3-10 years, and a third for 10+ years. This data indicates that DB Park may be fairly well-known to newcomers and longtime residents alike. To invite new parkgoers to the beach, I planned to incorporate welcome signage that celebrates queer history and informs of nudity in DB Park.

While income, ability/disability levels, and duration in Seattle were fairly diverse among respondents, they had limited diversity in terms of age and race/ethnicity as shown in **Figure 5.25**. Twenty six respondents stated they are White, while only one participant identified as mixed race/ethnicity and four respondents did not answer this question. The data therefore overrepresents the perspectives of White queer-identified parkgoers, while it largely misses the views of BIPOC parkgoers. This omission is significant, since BIPOC people and communities are those who are most greatly impacted by surveillance and enforcement in public spaces such as DB Park. The experiences, wants, and needs of BIPOC people and communities must ultimately be centered in order for the park to more fully support queer belonging. Regarding age, almost two-thirds of respondents were 25-34 years old, and another quarter were 35-44 years old as shown in **Figure 5.25**. The lack of representation from younger respondents - in part due to IRB restrictions with minors - and older respondents omitted vital perspectives on future uses of DB Park.

<u>Participants' Perceptions of Multiplicity</u>

Along with the demographics of survey/interview respondents themselves, the responses they provided regarding diversity and belonging at DB Park were

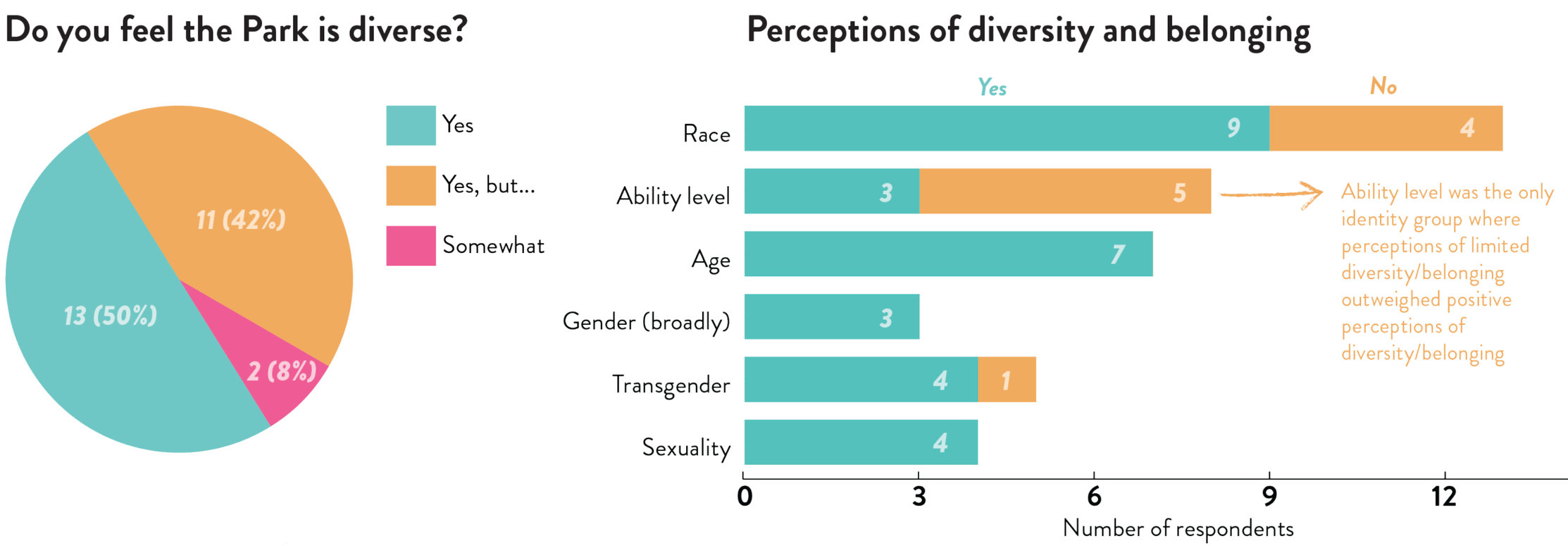



**Figure 5.26:** Participants' Perceptions of DB Park's Diversity. Perceptions of diversity amongst survey and interview respondents varied based upon demographics.

additionally illuminating. When asked if they felt DB Park is diverse, half of respondents said yes, while the other half described limitations to diversity at the park as shown in **Figure 5.26**. Through deeper analysis of survey and interview responses, I found that respondents observed limited diversity in terms of ability level and race. While 9 respondents felt DB Park was racially diverse, 4 respondents felt there were ways the Park limited a sense of belonging for BIPOC parkgoers. For some respondents, they described how DB Park feels "incredibly diverse" for people of "multiple races, multiple ages, multiple demographic backgrounds." For other respondents, they stated ways in which "white regulars" can "harass/belittle people of color" or how some of the "older regulars" can uphold a "culture of peace policing and crotchety racism" toward Black parkgoers. While perceptions of racial diversity and inclusivity are divided, I believe being aware of ways in which DB Park's redesign can support belonging for BIPOC parkgoers is imperative due to ways queer spaces can be exclusive of those with intersectional marginalized identities. As previously described and further elaborated upon in Chapter 7, DB Park redesigns must include collaboration with the diversity and multiplicity of community members who enjoy the space to ensure that there is "nothing about us without us," a phrase popularized by disability rights activists (Costanza-Chock 2020, 93; Charlton 1998, 3). Some proposed design interventions that may act as a starting point to support multiplicity at DB Park included a code of conduct reinforcing shared values of dignity and respect. Reducing negative impacts of surveillance and enforcement through landscaping were also important considerations for the park redesigns.

The only identity group where perceptions of limited multiplicity/belonging outweighed positive perceptions was for ability level, as shown in **Figure 5.26**. While 3 respondents mentioned ways the park supported or was frequented by those with disabilities, 5 respondents stated the park had limited accessibility. Respondents reported concerns with limited access to the beach,




**Figure 5.27:** Positive and Negative Perceptions of Diversity. Respondents described ways in which DB Park felt representative and supportive of those with diverse backgrounds. Conversely, respondents also described limits to diversity at DB Park.

and limited access within the beach. One respondent succinctly stated that DB Park is "NOT an accessible park, I can barely make it there." Other participants' concerns are shown in **Figure 5.27**. Several respondents suggested improvements, such as closer bus stops, wheelchair ramps, accessible and adjacent parking, level paths, shuttle rides, restrooms, and bike parking. Focusing on accessibility to make DB Park enjoyable and functional for parkgoers of all ability levels was a key component of the park redesigns.

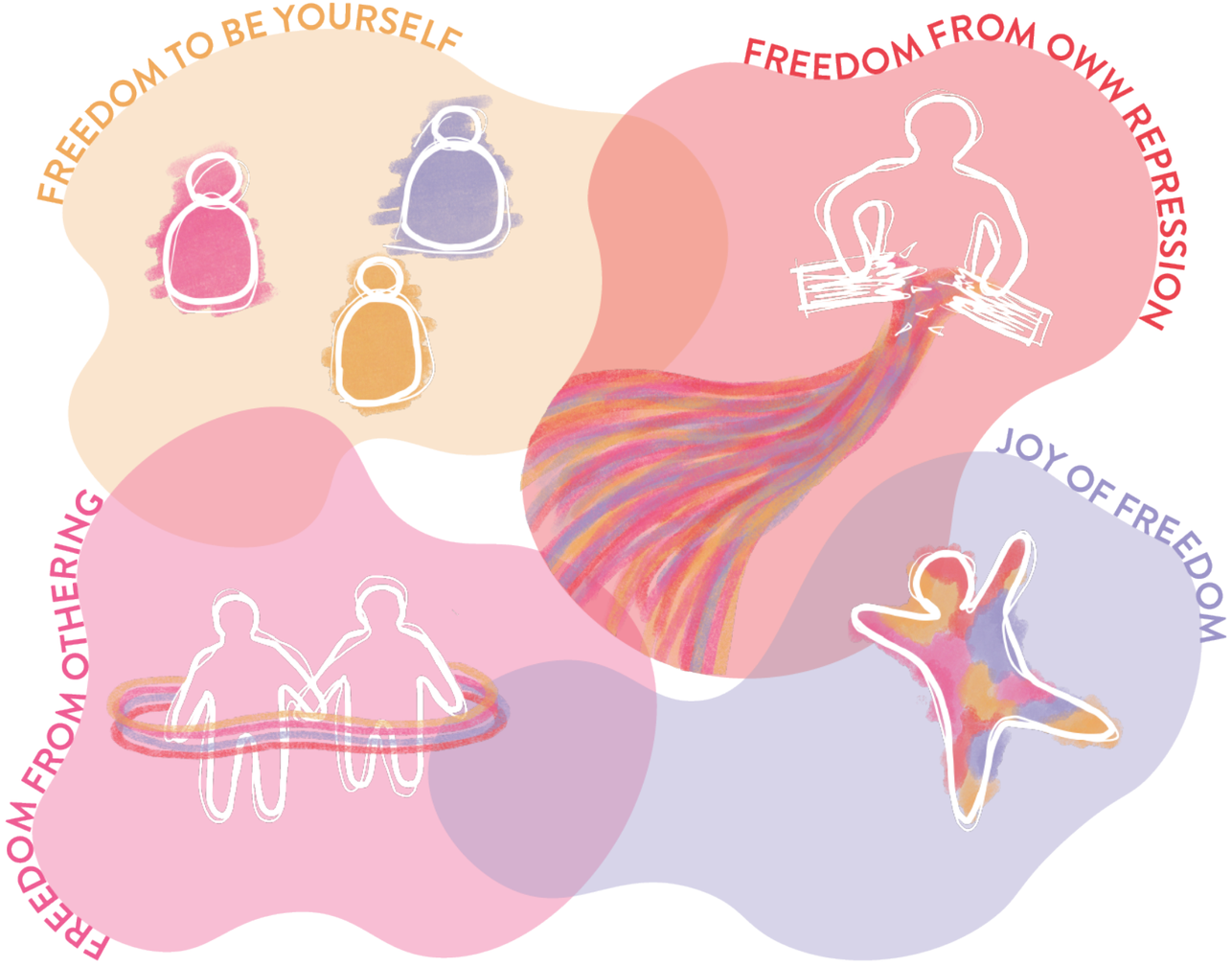
**Findings: Freedom**

The multiplicity present at DB Park in terms of parkgoers' different ages, races, incomes, ability/disabilities, gender identities, and sexual orientations was found to foster profound senses of freedom in survey/interview respondents. Identified freedoms included the freedom to be yourself, freedom from OWW repression, freedom from othering, and joy resulting from freedom. These freedoms are illustrated in **Figure 5.28**.



Freedom to be Yourself

Several parkgoers described ways in which they felt free to be themselves at DB Park, shown in **Figure 5.28**. A sense of freedom was particularly significant for parkgoers with further marginalized identities within the queer community, such as TGNB parkgoers or those with neurodivergence. During one interview, a trans parkgoer described how "being in a space that's not only full of other trans people, but other trans people who are open about their bodies, I think many of which are proud of their bodies, I think that's a really powerful thing... you can feel that energy and feel better about your own self." Another trans survey respondent emphasized that DB Park is "one of the only places for trans people to swim without being gawked at by straight people with children." Additionally, one respondent described ways in which swimsuits can gender trans folks' bodies and make swimming uncomfortable. Therefore, DB Park's culture as a nude-friendly beach can be additionally significant for TGNB parkgoers since gendered clothing can be omitted




"To have a safe place where you can actually go ***be queer and be free to express yourself***, that's really important to me"

"Nonbinary and trans family members should ***not have to worry about swimsuits that gender their bodies*** and make it so they can't feel comfortable swimming"

"***When you don't have clothes, you don't have the signifiers of class and identity***. And so those ***barriers become broken down*** in a way that you don't see in literally any other context.

"You ***don't have to feel*** that your background or your identity is ***inherently a minority or othered***"

"This is a space for ***all different kinds of bodies*** and we're ***not here to pass judgment***"

"You get a lot of the artists and the freaks. ***It just tends to be more of a party. It's fun***"

"When I am there, I kind of just like ***looking around and like smiling or laughing***"

**Figure 5.28:** Perceptions of Freedom at DB Park. Survey and interview respondents described how DB Park supported several facets of belonging and freedom.

entirely. These reflections demonstrate how DB Park is a unique space of freedom, visibility, and empowerment for TGNB parkgoers, and queer parkgoers more broadly. DB Park's importance is reflected in the large representation of TGNB folks - 61% - who participated in the survey and interviews for this project, demonstrating deep investment in DB Park's future.

As previously mentioned, DB Park is also significant for those with disabilities. One parkgoer with neurodivergence and clothing sensitivity described how they were able to freely be themselves at DB Park's nude beach. For this respondent, "having a place where it's known and invited and welcomed and normalized that you don't have to wear clothes, that neurodivergent belonging is very important." At DB Park, such freedom "feels healthy and feels normal in a way that is impossible in so many other places." Freedom to be yourself at DB Park directly relates to nudity for some parkgoers. As previously shown in **Figure 2.1**, "feeling you can show up as yourself" is a core tenet of belonging. Therefore, nudity is directly related to some parkgoers' sense of belonging. As such, nudity must continue to be respected and protected at DB Park in future designs.

<u>Freedom from OWW Repression</u>

Responses to the survey and interview questions revealed ways parkgoers valued freedom from OWW repression at DB Park. Participants described queerness as "not heteronormative or very binary ways of thinking" that are "free from rigid societal expectations around gender presentation, around body expression, around sexuality." These values directly reflect DB Park as a space that is frequented by a multiplicity of parkgoers who do not align with cisgender/heteronormative identities or conceptions of "decorum" about clothing/nudity. When asked how their ideal DB Park would look, respondents described how the park and its stewards would resist OWW repression. One parkgoer stated a desire for the park to be a "free and open space for radical self expression and body inclusivity where people can come exist as humans and be free of the class structures that we live with...

to just exist and commune with others and nature." Radical self expression, breaking of harmful binaries, and connections between humans and more-than-humans are all central to freedom from OWW repression. As illuminated through analysis, respondents want such freedoms to continue to exist in future proposals for DB Park. As this parkgoer mentioned, being able to "commune with others and nature" is one such avenue of freedom. Particularly since queer ecologies have been repressed in the OWW, incorporating queer more-than-humans at DB Park supports freedom from OWW repression amongst humans and more-than-humans. Continuing to consider ways that planting design could facilitate connection between queer beings at DB Park is one avenue to support freedom from OWW repression by highlighting the expansive beauty and naturalness of queerness.

Freedom from Othering

Respondents also described ways in which they felt free from judgment and othering at DB Park. In interviews, parkgoers described how the park is "for all different kinds of bodies and we're not here to pass judgment," and that "you don't have to feel your background or your identity is inherently a minority or othered." Such freedom is likely both cause and effect of the multiplicity of parkgoers present at DB Park. Welcoming attitudes of parkgoers likely encourages a breadth of diverse park users, who then further support values of inclusivity. One interviewee additionally advocated for nudity at DB Park as a way of eliminating the tendency of housed individuals to "other" unhoused neighbors. Since clothes can signify class, their absence breaks down barriers between housed and unhoused parkgoers. The freedom to be nude fosters conversations between parkgoers of different socioeconomic backgrounds that may not occur for many outside of DB Park. For this interviewee, such freedom is "what we're trying to protect."

Joy of Freedom

A significant component that arose during interviews and the survey was the joy parkgoers derived from these various freedoms at DB Park. As one interviewee described, "you get a lot of the artists and the freaks [at DB Park]. It just tends to be more of a party." This use of the word "freaks" celebrates and reclaims a phrase hurled maliciously at queer folks. The word also highlights how DB Park invites a multiplicity of users that freely subvert OWW norms. Together, the presence of these parkgoers makes DB Park a joyful space. Other respondents described "smiling," "laughing," and having fun at DB Park, as well as the excitement and invigoration that comes with nudity. Taken together, survey and interview respondents reflected warmly about their times at DB Park, and emphasized their desire to protect this unique space of queer joy.

**Takeaways: Multiplicity and Freedom**

Ultimately, the theme "Multiplicity and Freedom" has several takeaways for DB Park's proposed designs. DB Park is a vital gathering space for queer community members of diverse backgrounds. However, given perceptions of limited diversity or belonging in terms of race and ability level, design considerations relating to accessibility and surveillance/enforcement - factors that greatly impact disabled and BIPOC community members - will be central to future design iterations. Additionally, including design elements that improve DB Park for all community members, with particular consideration for houseless neighbors that enjoy the park, is significant moving forward. Finally, exploring ways to reinforce and celebrate freedoms that arise in DB Park will be central to design.

The following is a list of design takeaways that aim to support the theme of Multiplicity and Freedom at DB Park.

- Affirmational Signage: Signage celebrating 2SLGBTQIA+ history and present use of the park; recognizing park as nude-friendly; reinforcing shared park values
- Essential Needs: Improved amenities including permanent restroom, drinking fountains, showers
- Accessibility: multimodal transportation to DB Park; accessible parking at DB Park; ADA accessible ramps throughout DB Park; improved amenities
- Safety: Use landscaping to buffer effects of surveillance/enforcement
- Learning and Participation: Landscaping and/or educational opportunities to connect humans with more-than-humans at DB Park



## CONNECTION AND COMMUNITY

A recurrent theme from respondents was the importance DB Park held as a space of connection and community. Such connections included those between parkgoers and DB Park itself, and those between multiple parkgoers to form a broader community. Taken together, these forms of connection and community at DB Park support queerness and belonging. Another topic relating to connection and community was that of physical intimacy and sex. Some parkgoers felt physical intimacy and sex were important in queer spaces, while others did not want these activities at DB Park. These topics are explored further below.

**Findings: Connection to Place**

Several respondents described deep attachments to DB Park itself seen in **Figure 5.29**. One participant described how having "strong connections and ties to [DB Park]" is an important component of belonging. Another interviewee stated that "no one has other stories about other parks like they have about Denny Blaine," particularly as a common date spot for queer folks in Seattle. One parkgoer described how the park was the "first place that felt like... was home in Seattle." These experiences of personal ties, individual yet commonly shared stories, and a sense of home all highlight the profound connection queer-identified parkgoers hold to DB Park. As was described in the Multiplicity and Freedom theme, having signage that reinforces the significance DB Park holds to queer parkgoers may help protect the park as a space for connection in the future.

**Findings: Connection to People**

As a space frequented by a multitude of users who freely express themselves, DB Park acts as a community-building space among the 2SLGBTQIA+ community. **Figure 5.29** includes quotes that highlight connections parkgoers experience in DB Park. This quality of connection was exemplified in an interview where the respondent described how one can feel an "instant sense of community" at the park. For transgender parkgoers in particular, "Denny Blaine is a gathering spot that, if you're a trans person, you can go there and meet other trans people." One respondent reflected how the park's small size may contribute to parkgoers' ease of conversation, stating "it's kind of unavoidable" to talk since "you're just going to be right next to somebody." These comments reflect the significance DB Park holds as a space for making connections with other queer folks, and its uniqueness as a community-building space for transgender parkgoers. Incorporating gathering spaces that facilitate connections was a design consideration when reimagining DB Park.

One aspect of connection between parkgoers at DB Park was connection made through physical intimacy and sex. As shown in **Figure 5.30**, these were debated topics amongst parkgoers. Some respondents viewed physical intimacy and sex as necessary qualities to queer spaces, and emphasized their importance for DB Park. They argued that enforcement against physical intimacy and sex feels less queer-friendly. One respondent summarized these sentiments by stating "that a queer space historically has had public sex... I think bodies are really important and bodies touching each other... is really important and needs to keep existing, especially now." For these respondents, physical intimacy, sex, and cruising are essential to DB Park's queerness.

However, some respondents disapproved of sex in DB Park, or recounted times when physical intimacy was disapproved of by others. Perspectives against physical intimacy and sex included a desire to separate sex from nudity, and maintain the park as a non-sexual space in contrast to sexual queer venues such as bars and clubs. One survey respondent who identified as asexual stated how she "hates that nudity is sexualized" and wants the park to be "nude NOT lewd." Others described how the perception of neighbors' disapproval of sexual activity at the park may cause self-regulation amongst parkgoers themselves. For instance, one interviewee stated how he was being "PG, PG-13 amorous" on the beach with a partner when he was told by a beach regular to "go somewhere else" if "you guys are going to get hanky panky." Another respondent described how sexual activities "cleaned up immediately" since the "neighbors are pissed" about such activities. Together, the survey and interview responses reveal how topics of physical intimacy and sex are highly debated among park users. These topics hold implications for surveillance and enforcement within the park by residents living adjacent to the park, cameras, private security, police, park rangers, and park users themselves.

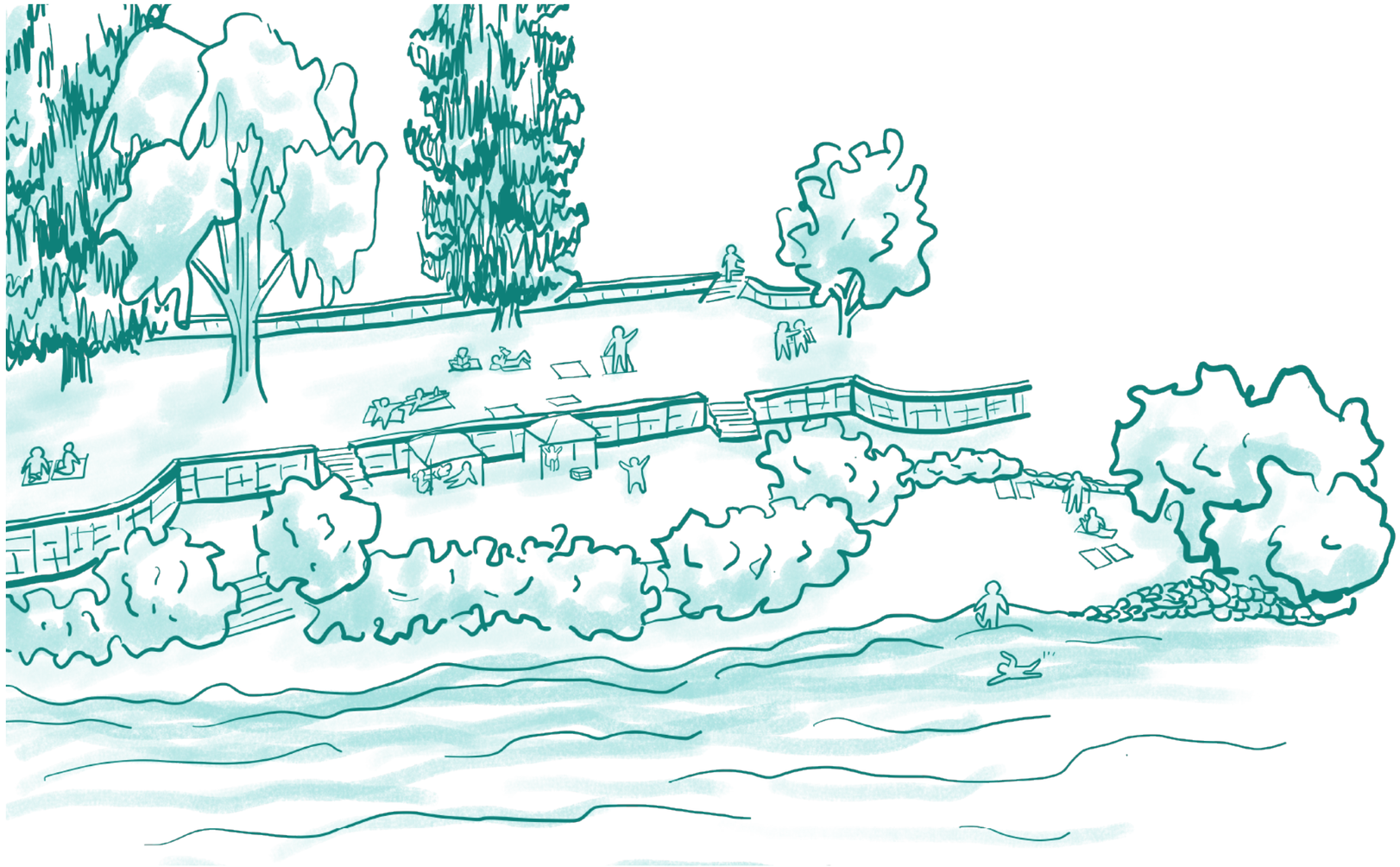


**Figure 5.29:** Connection to Place and People at DB Park. Survey and interview respondents detailed ways in which they felt profound connections to DB Park, and how this space supported queer community-building.

## Connection to place

"No one has other stories about other parks like they have about Denny Blaine"

"It meant a lot to me that [Denny Blaine Park] was there and that I could see a gay space and be with gay people... ***Denny Blaine is part of my personal story and why I care about that. So that's one aspect of belonging.***"

## Connections to people

"[Denny Blaine Park] is ***the first place that I felt like was home in Seattle***"

"Denny Blaine is a ***gathering spot that, if you're a trans person, you can go there and meet other trans people***"

At Denny Blaine Park, you feel "an ***instant sense of community***" where you can "***go and be accepted and... have that human connection***"

**Takeaways: Connection and Community**

As described, this theme highlights the need for future designs of DB Park to maintain and amplify queer connection and community in DB Park. Having space to make friends, meet friends, find broader community, relate to the more-than-human beings in the park, and/or create memories with the park itself are essential. While the history of cruising in DB Park and beyond is not discussed in this thesis, the topic of cruising in queer culture provides important context on the role public sex historically and presently plays for those in the gay and queer community relating to safety, community-building, and pleasure (Street, 2025).

The following is a list of design takeaways that aim to support the theme of Connection and Community at DB Park.

- Affirmational Signage: Signage celebrating 2SLGBTQIA+ history and present use of the park
- Gathering: Spaces for small group gathering and larger event spaces to support connection

## Importance of physical intimacy and sex

"It's a place that you can go, it's definitely a ***queer date***, and it's a touchstone if you're in Seattle and you're going on a date, someone's gonna invite you to Denny Blaine soon enough and it's a ***common shared cultural experience*** in Seattle."

"Some ***free sexual expression*** is good in gay spaces"

"If we're talking how to make it feel more authentically queer, having that ***element of sexuality added back in is integral*** for some people into what they define as a queer space

"I think that a ***queer space historically has had public sex***... I think bodies are really important and ***bodies touching each other... is really important*** and needs to keep existing, especially now"

In a perfect world at Denny Blaine Park, "people would be able to ***freely cruise without worry***"

Some respondents viewed physical intimacy and sex as necessary qualities to queer spaces, and their importance for Denny Blaine Park. They argued enforcement against intimacy and sex feels less queer-friendly.

## Disapproval of physical intimacy and sex

"Free to be ***nude NOT lewd***. As someone whose sexual orientation is asexual, ***I hate that nudity is sexualized***"

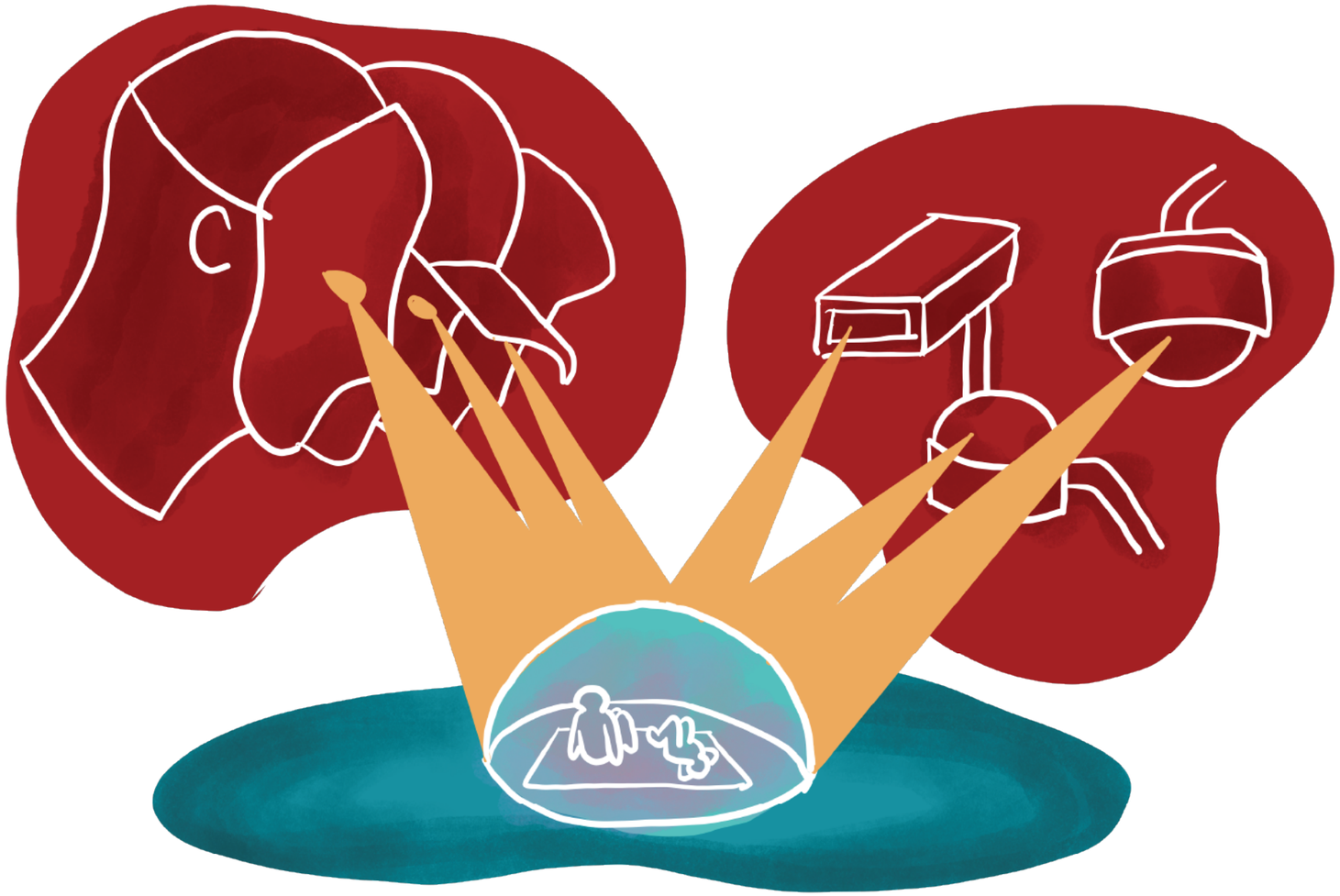
"I see ***Denny Blaine as a unique non-sexual meeting space*** for queer people... a good portion of our spaces such as clubs and bars are either explicity sexual or implicitly sexual"

"Since the playground proposal when people were like ***'oh shit, the neighbors are pissed about this,' [sexual activities] got cleaned up immediately***"

"I was hanging out with a guy on a beach towel and we were being like PG, PG-13 amorous. It was pretty tame. And the woman who I've seen there a lot, older, she kind of was like ***'listen, if you guys are going to get hanky panky you need to go somewhere else***"

Some respondents disapproved of sex in Denny Blaine Park. Arguments included separating sex from nudity and maintaining the park as a non-sexual space due to the existence of other sexual queer venues, or reactions based on neighbors' disapproval.

**Figure 5.30:** Perceptions of Physical Intimacy and Sex. Survey and interview respondents held mixed views of physical intimacy and sex in queer spaces and at DB Park.



**11 or 35%** respondents mentioned the importance of **safety**

**6 or 100%** of interviewees mentioned the importance of **safety**

*"I brought a group of friends there last year... and I told them the story of Denny Blaine as a **historic safe place that's being threatened**, so **safety is the feeling that I want** associated with the place"*

**Figure 5.31:** Importance of Safety at DB Park. Survey and interview respondents emphasized the importance of safety at DB Park.

## SAFETY, THREATS, AND RESISTANCE

Several respondents highlighted a desire for safety in queer spaces, or existing senses of safety in DB Park. However, perceived threats from without and within the park pose risks to DB Park and to respondents' sense of safety. The respondents described the ways parkgoers have resisted threats and maintained the park's culture as a protected queer and nudist space.

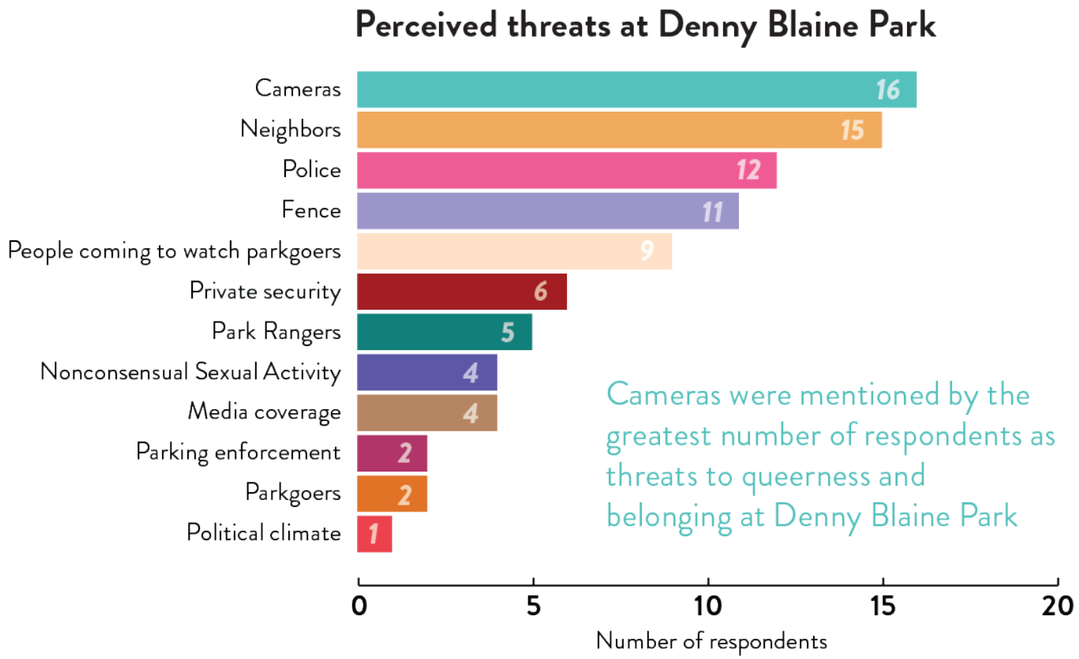
### Findings: Perceptions of Safety

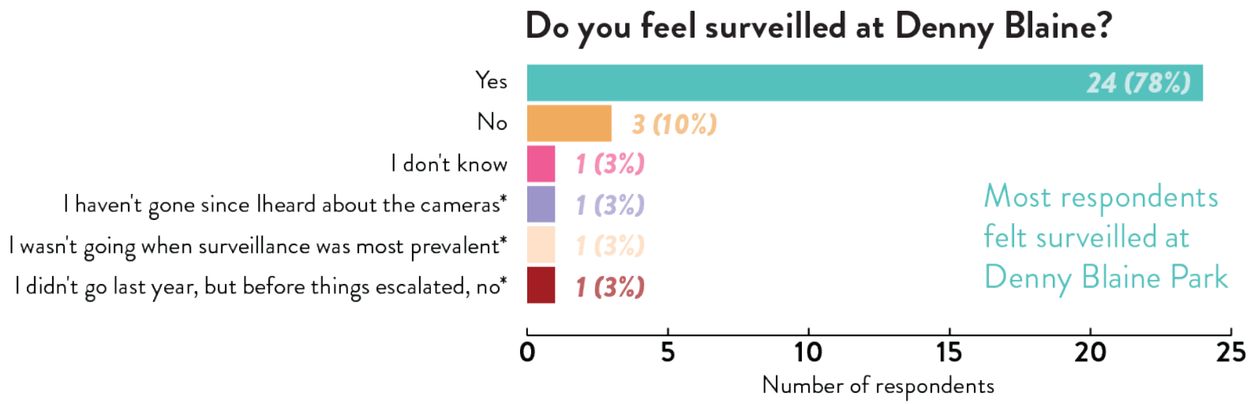
Six or 100% of interviewees, and 11 or 35% of total respondents, mentioned the importance of safety in queer spaces or at DB Park specifically, as shown in **Figure 5.31**. One parkgoer described how DB Park is a "historic safe space that's being threatened, so safety is the feeling that I want associated with the place." Feeling safe to freely relax, enjoy, and express oneself at DB Park is important to queer respondents.

### Findings: Perceptions of Threats

While respondents value safety, they reflected on ways in which they perceive threats to queerness and belonging at DB Park. The survey/interview questions did not explicitly ask about threats, but based upon a range of negative perceptions about these groups/entities that arose through other questions, I have qualified this category as "perceived threats." Combining survey and interview responses, I categorized these perceived threats as shown in **Figure 5.32**.

Cameras pointed at the park were identified by the greatest number of respondents as entities in conflict with queer park usage. This was followed by adjacent and nearby property owners, a police presence at the park, the abatement fence, and people coming to watch/ogle parkgoers. Cameras on neighboring properties cause the park to feel "less like a queer space." Respondents felt that "neighbors are keen on eliminating nudity or shutting down the park entirely," and "want us gone." A respondent described how "increased police or park ranger presence of any kind is a direct attack on



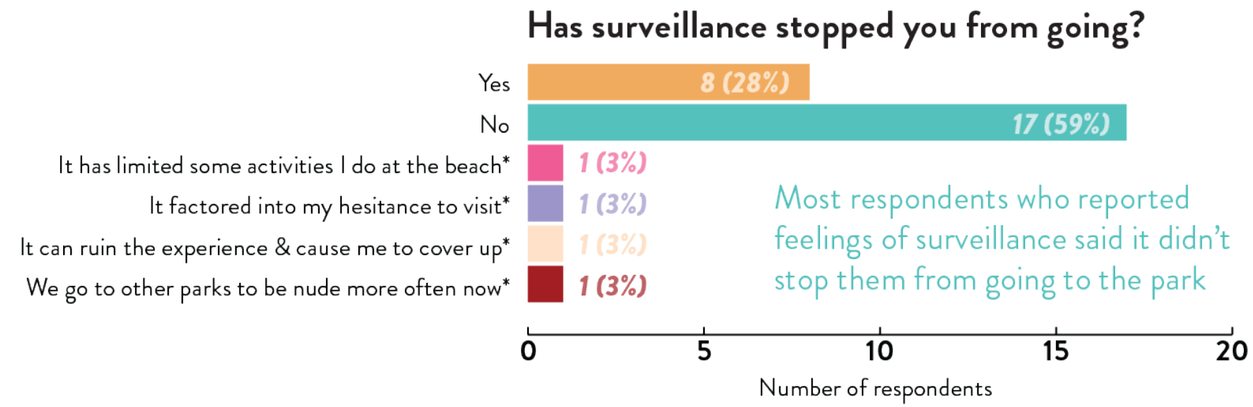




**Figure 5.32:** Perceived Threats at DB Park. Survey and interview respondents described perceived surveillance and threats to DB Park's community members and queerness. Perceptions of surveillance from these groups have led to reductions in attendance among 28% of respondents.

and threat to our community." The abatement fence additionally "hurts [DB Park] beyond measure" by creating "a sense of shame that permeates the park." People, including "groups of fully clothed men," also come to "stare over the fence" and ogle nude parkgoers. These responses represent a selection of concerns raised by respondents about perceived threats to queerness and belonging at DB Park. A more comprehensive summary of parkgoers' views and concerns about perceived threats is shown in **Figure 5.33**.

Other perceived threats included private security, park rangers, nonconsensual sexual activity, and media coverage. Last, parking enforcement, fellow parkgoers, and the overall political climate were mentioned by 1-2 respondents, signaling these as less immediate or pressing issues to queerness and belonging at DB Park. When asked, most respondents (78%) also felt surveilled at DB Park, which has stopped almost a third (28%) of respondents from going to the park as shown in **Figure 5.32**. As these answers indicate, respondents



perceived threats from several sources at DB Park, detrimentally impacting their comfort and attendance.

### Findings: Perceptions of Resistance

In contrast to perceived threats, respondents also described how parkgoers resisted perceived threats at DB Park. **Figure 5.34** describes these forms of resistance. Regarding nonconsensual sexual activity (a concern cited by 4 respondents), parkgoers described how people being "creepy or gross" are "confronted" and told "this is not the place for that." Another interviewee described how parkgoers are "kicked off the beach… for being a creep, jerking off and staring at people." Nonconsensual sexual activity at DB Park goes against "the one rule" of the park; therefore, stopping parkgoers from engaging in nonconsensual sexual activity is a form of resistance.

Survey and interview respondents additionally emphasized the importance of resisting broader forms of OWW powers and normative forces at DB Park. One interviewee stated how "community has to create

## CAMERAS

"In the past couple of years, it's felt ***a lot less like a queer space because with all the security and the cameras***"

"They have ***videos and pictures of my baby*** because they think that nude people around babies is child abuse. (***They even called the cops and filed a police report once***)"

## NEIGHBORS

"Neighbors are ***keen on eliminating nudity or shutting down the park entirely***, if not through the court, then by intimidation"

"There's the ever present ***pressure of conformity***, but also a kind of an ***aura of gentrification*** you get from the neighborhood"

"These people don't want compromise. ***They want us gone***."

## POLICE

"Increased police or ranger presence of any kind is ***a direct attack on and threat to our community***. I would resist that change in the strongest terms"

"If there are police presence or that feeling of surveillance, then that could definitely be something ***impacting people of color or marginalized identities more***"

## FENCE

The fence feels "***insulting and dehumanizing***"

"The ***fence hurts it beyond measure***, like it very much creates ***a sense of shame*** that permeates the park"

**Figure 5.33:** Direct Quotes of Perceived Threats. Shown above is a sampling of direct quotes from survey and interview participants that illuminate perceptions of threats at DB Park.

## PEOPLE COMING TO WATCH PARKGOERS

People "***stare over the fence at people*** because they know they get to see tits"

"Groups of ***fully clothed men watching***"

## PRIVATE SECURITY

During a polar plunge event, "one of the neighbors ***private security was just like, ogling***. It was just weird. It's kind of creepy"

Private security acts as "***the beach bouncer***"

## PARK RANGERS

"Park rangers and police are ***not educated properly on nudity laws*** and have ***historically caused more harm than good***."

"Park rangers do not increase safety and they ***impact who feels comfortable at the park***"

## NONCONSENSUAL SEXUAL ACTIVITY

"People who are openly harassing others with their bodies must know they aren't welcome at DB. ***Nonconsensual sexual exposure has no place at the beach***."

"The ***only time I've ever seen people ostracized or kicked off the beach is for being a creep, jerking off and staring at people***. That's basically the one rule."

## MEDIA COVERAGE

"The negative press that we have gotten has somewhat made it feel ***more threatening***"

"***Gawkers have started showing up*** since Denny Blaine made the news"

## PARKING ENFORCEMENT

"I don't think parking enforcement, adding more parking enforcement would help that feeling of surveillance"

## PARKGOERS

"***People also can deputize themselves*** who aren't part of the police, um, but can act ***as extensions of the police***."

"I have seen the ***white regulars*** be fucked up and ***harass/belittle people of color and poor people***"

"There are a lot of people there who are sort of like ***anti-public sex in ways that make it feel much less welcoming or queer***"

## POLITICAL CLIMATE

"With all this ***political tension and it's feeling like a not safe place***"



## Nonconsensual Park Use

"If people are being creepy or gross, ***they are confronted and said, like, this is not the place for that***"

"The only time I've ever seen people ostracized or ***kicked off the beach is for being a creep***, jerking off and staring at people. ***That's basically the one rule***"

## OWW powers and norms

"The only way it's going to stay is if everyone refuses because ***they can't do anything if all of us refuse***"

"So much of what needs to be done it terms of ***the fight for this place*** is ***stuff that doesn't sound palatable or that isn't palatable to the heterosexual world***"

"Community has to create ***actively, always maintain that queerness, or very quickly it starts to feel like a besieged park***"

**Figure 5.34:** Resistance to Threats at DB Park. Survey and interview respondents describe various ways in which perceived threats, ranging from nonconsensual sexual park use to broader OWW forces, are stopped or resisted at DB Park.

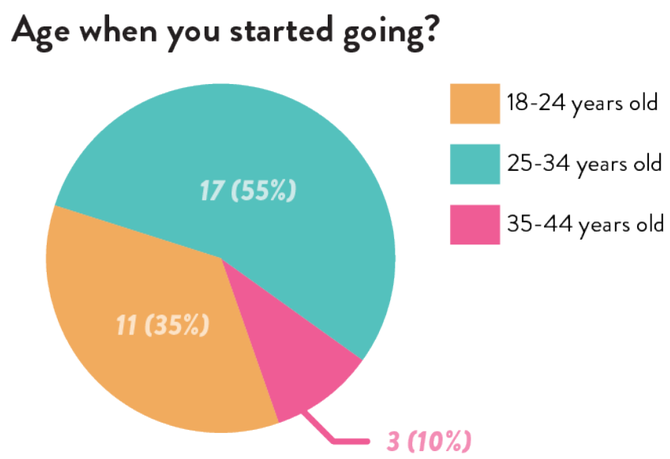
actively, always maintain, that queerness, or very quickly it starts to feel like a besieged park." Another interviewee reiterated the importance of collective action, stating that threatening forces at DB Park "can't do anything if all of us refuse… my belonging is contingent on being surrounded by people who are also dedicated to that space." Through collective organizing, parkgoers can resist threats at DB Park.

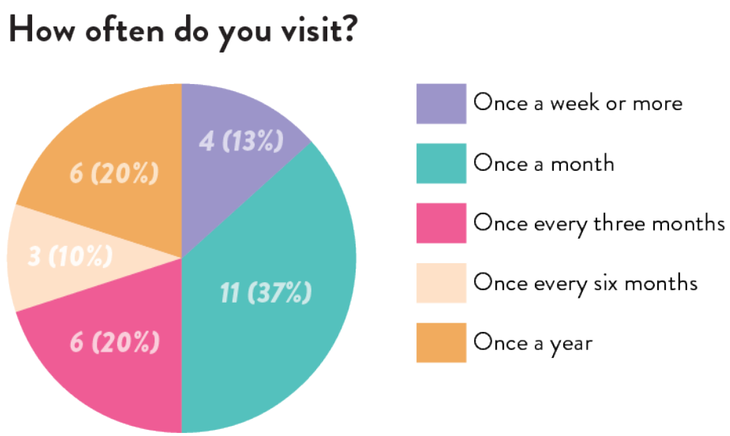
**Takeaways: Safety, Threats, and Resistance**

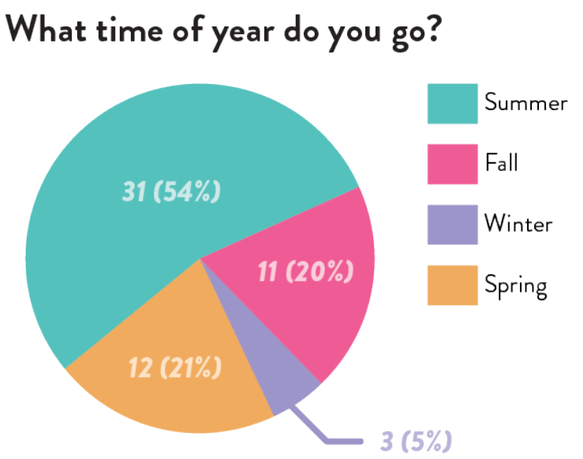
Parkgoers' abilities to resist encroachments on DB Park has direct implications for its design, particularly relating to signage and enforcement of actions. Since several parkgoers perceived enforcement by police and park rangers as a threat, the majority (61%) of respondents did not want an increase of park rangers at DB Park as shown in **Figure 5.39**. As described by respondents, the importance of parkgoers' safeguarding themselves and the park is vital. Whether these are actions against "creepy" parkgoers or OWW forces, the ability of parkgoers to "actively maintain" queerness and "refuse" threats may ultimately be the best form of protection for the park and its users. Additionally, having signage that publicizes the importance of collective action in DB Park can be incorporated into the park's future to support queerness and belonging. In reimagining DB Park, I considered ways safety could be supported through elements including signage describing shared park values, and vegetation that reduces harmful impacts of surveillance. Enforcement proposals for DB Park will be elaborated upon in the next theme.

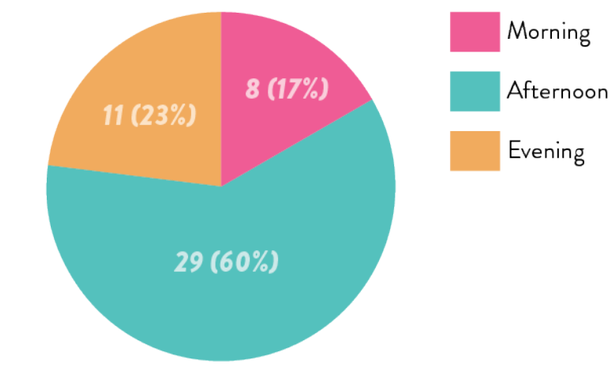
The following is a list of design takeaways that aim to support the theme of Safety, Threats, and Resistance at DB Park.

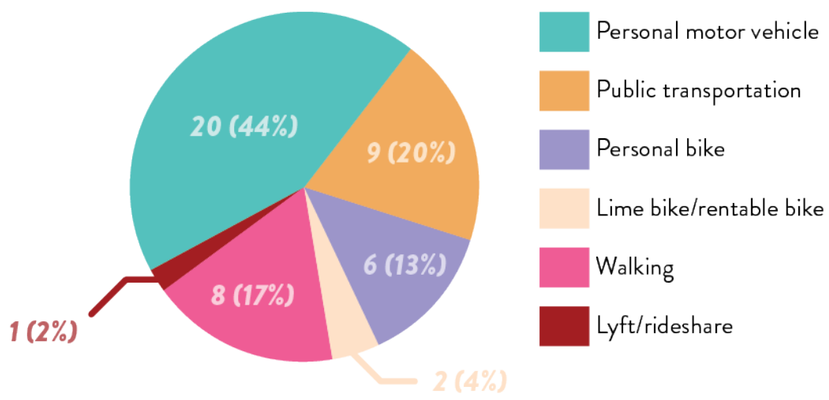
- Affirmational Signage: Signage celebrating 2SLGBTQIA+ history and present use of the park; recognizing the park as nude-friendly; reinforcing shared park values and collective action
- Safety: Using landscaping to buffer effects of surveillance



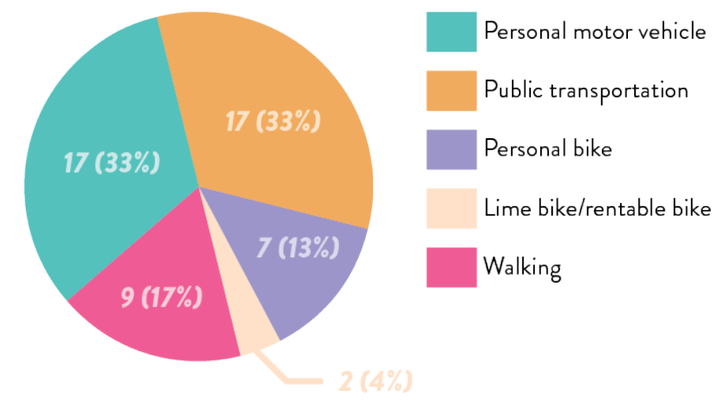




**Figure 5.35:** Participants' Usage and Access to DB Park. Charts above summarize the times, methods, and frequencies that survey and interview respondents visit DB Park.

## DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS AND PROPOSALS

The fourth theme, Design Considerations and Proposals, documented data on how respondents access and enjoy DB Park, and interest in potential park proposals. Design proposals provided in the survey were categorized as accessibility, amenities, enforcement, landscaping, and signage. The proposals shown to respondents on the survey and interviews were a non-exhaustive list that attempted to present a range of ideas previously identified by community members, FoDB, Denny Blaine Park for All, and the City of Seattle. I identified existing proposals from websites affiliated with each of the above stakeholder groups, and combined them for the survey and interviews.

### Findings: Patterns of Usage

Participants were asked a series of questions to learn when, how, and why they go to DB Park as shown in **Figure 5.35**. In summary, most respondents started going to DB Park under the age of 34. Half of respondents visited the park once a month or more, with most respondents (54%) going in the summer and fewer (5%) in the winter. Most respondents (60%) go to the park in the afternoon. Regarding transportation, the greatest number of respondents took personal vehicles to DB Park (44%), although public transportation and personal vehicles were identified as equally accessible methods (33%). Additionally, a majority (63%) of participants wanted to have more parking spots as shown in **Figure 5.37**. Since personal vehicles and parking were important for many respondents, maintaining parking spaces at or near DB Park was a significant consideration when redesigning the park.

Respondents additionally shared ways in which they enjoy spending time at DB Park as shown in **Figure 5.36**. Although the majority of parkgoers engage in group activities at DB Park, many also spend time alone. Respondents engaged in a broad range of activities at DB Park, such as attending events and work parties,

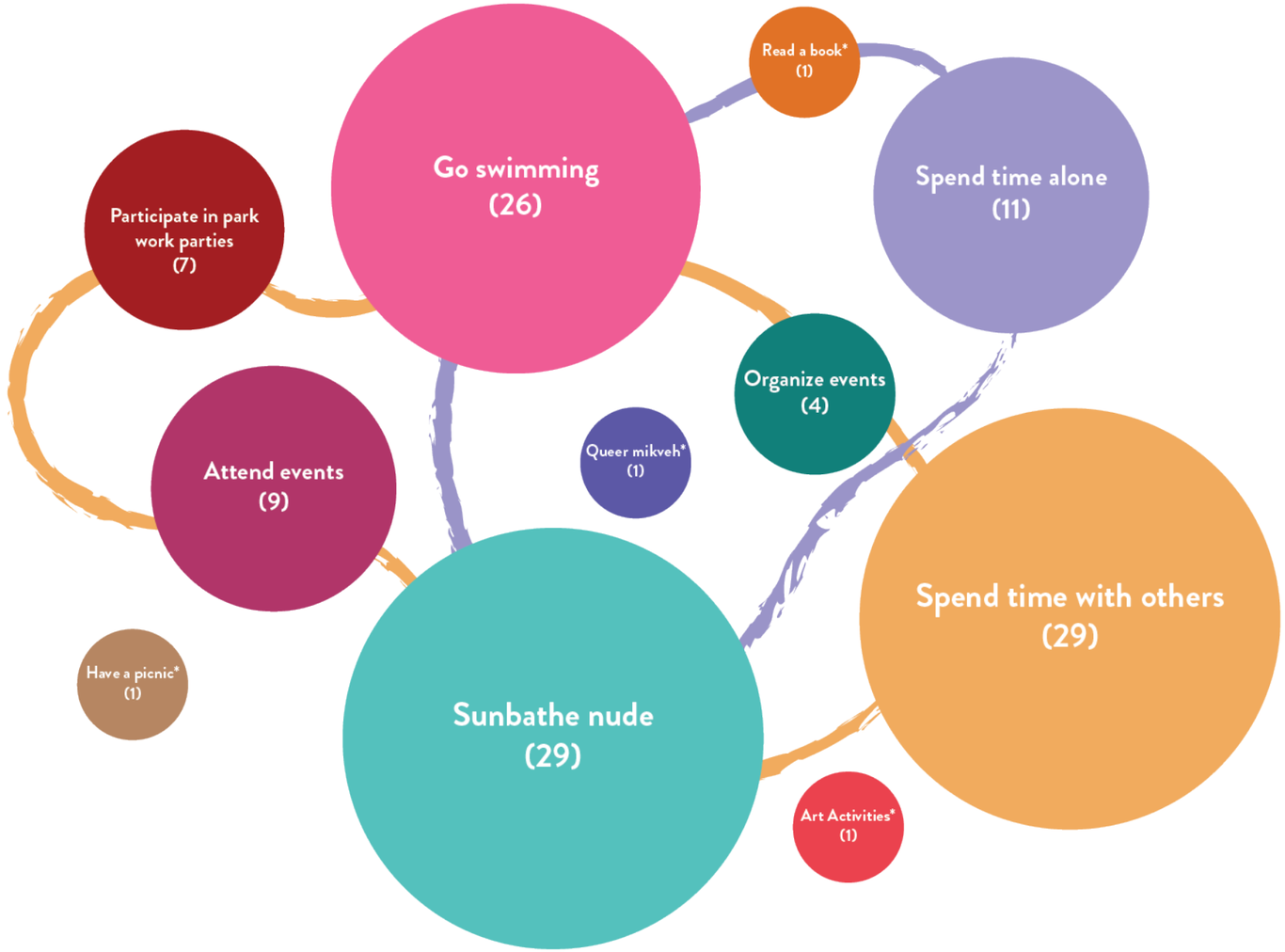



**Figure 5.36:** Activities at DB Park. Survey and interview respondents describe how they enjoy spending time at DB Park.

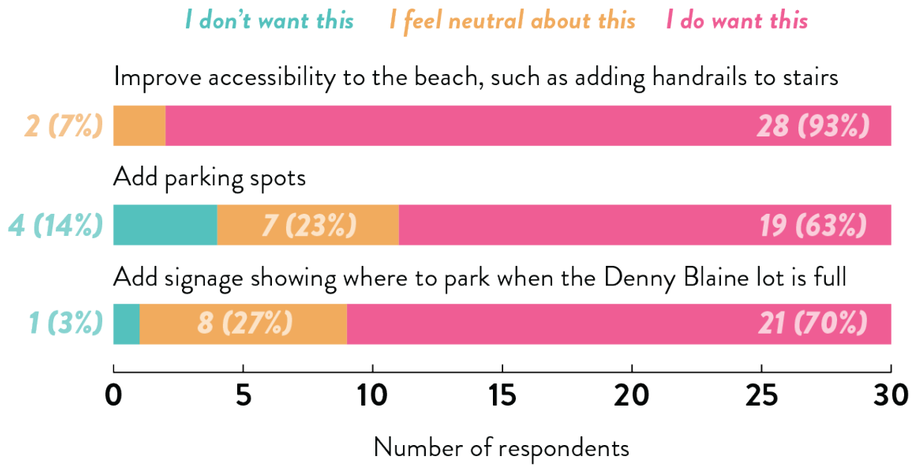
"I've always ***loved getting to just be naked next to gay people who aren't like me***... like some random femme doll, or having a leather daddy laugh at a joke I'm making"

***"Swimming is so intense for so many trans people***, social responses to having our bodies on display in normative spaces is mostly prohibitive. This is ***the only beach in Seattle all my friends have to be semi naked in public together and feel more comfortable*** than anywhere else and just chill and swim."

"When I was about 20 and dating, ***it was a free date***. So many times I would meet somebody new and we'd start dating and ***that would be one of the first dates that I'd propose.***"

"There are ***many community members that are low income and a few unhoused members, so we like to do cook outs*** throughout the summer."

## Proposed Accessibility Changes

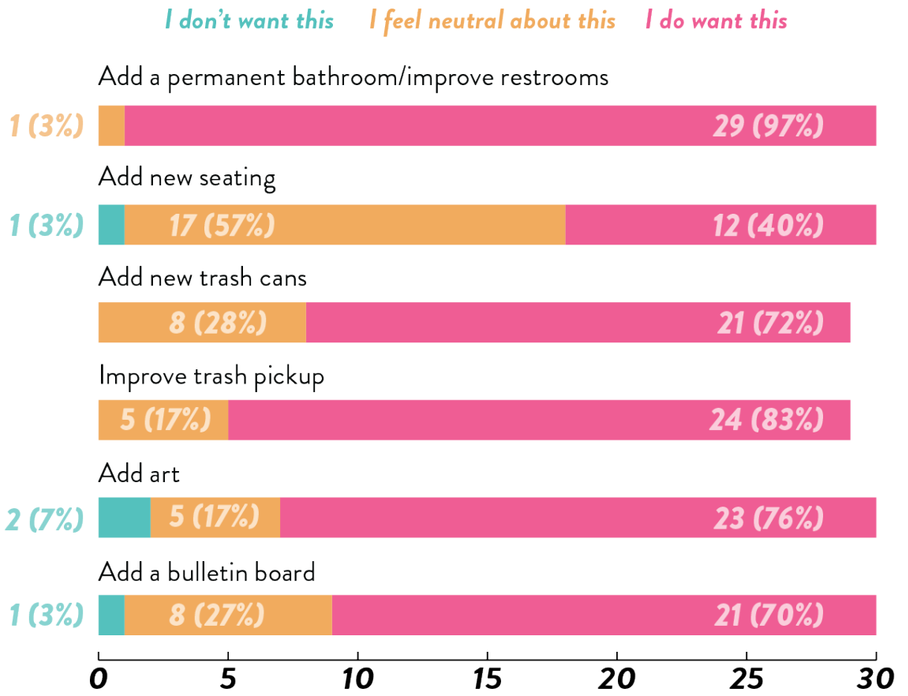



### ADDITIONAL ACCESSIBILITY PROPOSALS:

- ADA access down to beach
- Direct/shorter walkways to support those with chronic illnesses
- Picnic structure for shade
- Closer bus stop
- Shuttle rides
- Bike racks
- Add a place to park electric scooters
- Add a designated crosswalk across E Lake Washington Blvd
- Consider making E Denny Blaine Pl loop a one-way street
- Add ADA parking spots
- Connect Denny Blaine to Capitol Hill, Howell Beach, West Seattle, South Seattle, and farther areas around Seattle

**Figure 5.37:** Proposed Accessibility Changes. Survey and interview respondents voiced interest or disinterest in a list of accessibility proposals for DB Park. Respondents also proposed new accessibility changes.

## Proposed Amenities




### ADDITIONAL AMENITY PROPOSALS:

- Add a roped off swimming area to protect swimmers from boat traffic
- Floating dock
- Showers
- Water fountains
- BBQ Grills
- Fire pit

**Figure 5.38:** Proposed Amenities. Survey and interview respondents voiced interest or disinterest in a list of amenity proposals for DB Park. Respondents also proposed new amenities.

organizing events, art activities, reading, having picnics, or having a queer mikveh. Due to the diversity of activities, and that parkgoers enjoy spending time with others and alone, incorporating a variety of spaces for groups and individuals to participate in open-ended activities was important in DB Park redesigns.

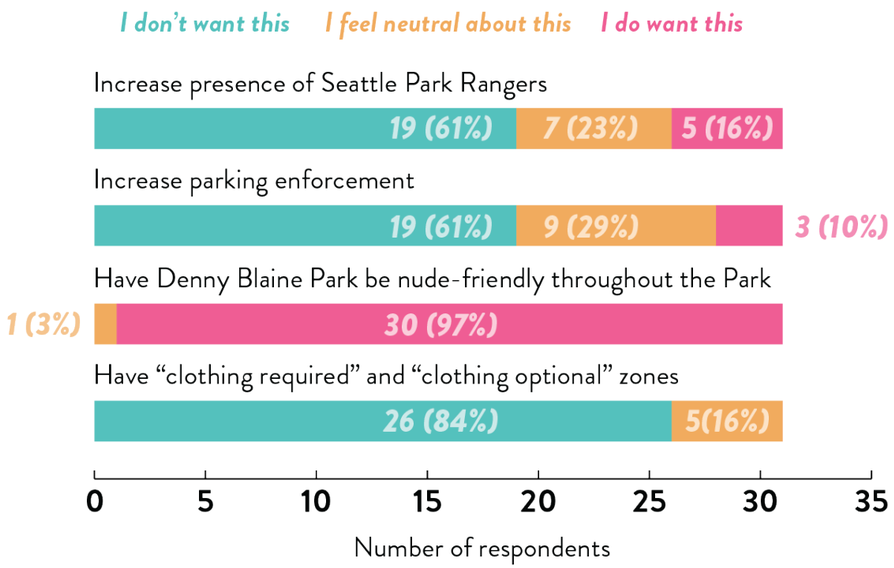
#### Findings: Proposed Accessibility Changes

When asked about possible accessibility changes in the design proposals for DB Park, the majority of respondents were in favor of improving overall access (93%), adding parking spaces (63%), and adding signage identifying alternative parking locations when the DB Park lot is full (70%). Some respondents (14%) did not want more parking spaces added. **Figure 5.37** shows preferences for these proposals. Participants also included ideas for other accessibility improvements at DB Park. Participants' additional proposals are shown in **Figure 5.37**. Due to these overall positive perceptions, the park's importance to respondents with disabilities, and the significance of equitable access in queer design, accessibility was considered as a core tenet for DB Park proposals explored in Chapter 6.

#### Findings: Proposed Amenities

Participants were presented with a list of proposed amenities for DB Park shown in **Figure 5.38**. The vast majority (97%) of respondents wanted a permanent or improved restroom. Improved trash pickup was the second most popular amenity (83%). Trash cans, art, and a bulletin board all were desired by the majority of participants (70-80%). Conversely, a minority of participants (40%) stated they wanted new seating, whereas the majority (57%) were neutral about increased seating options. Although participants desired seating less, I believe that having seating options is important for accessibility. Seating with armrests, backrests, or variable heights for those with different abilities are currently absent at DB Park. All of these proposals - bathroom, seating, trash cans, art, bulletin board - were important considerations for DB Park's redesign. Respondents' proposed the additional amenities listed in **Figure 5.38**.

## Proposed Enforcement Changes



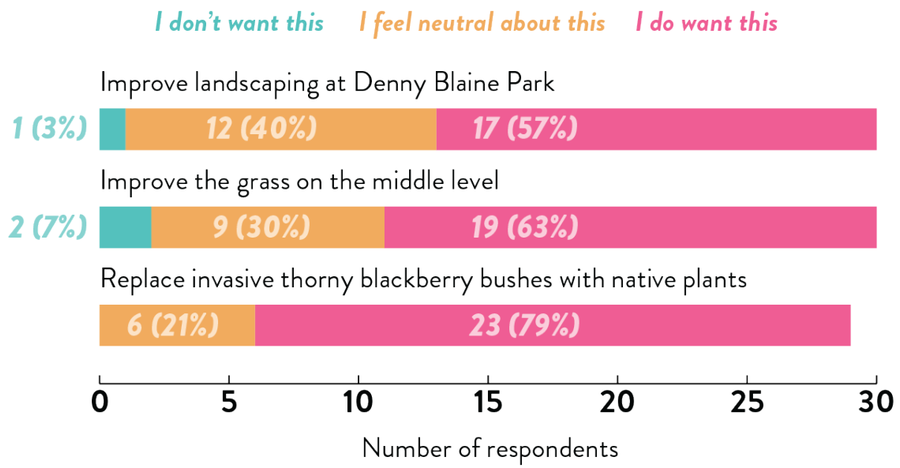

***84% of respondents opposed having "clothing required" and "clothing optional" zones*** at Denny Blaine Park

***97% of respondents want Denny Blaine Park to be nude-friendly*** throughout the Park. Nudity is legal in Seattle

The ***majority of respondents in the surveys and interviews opposed an increase in Seattle Park Rangers and parking enforcement*** at Denny Blaine Park.

**Figure 5.39:** Proposed Enforcement Changes. Survey and interview respondents voiced interest or disinterest in a list of enforcement changes for DB Park.

## Proposed Landscaping Changes




### ADDITIONAL LANDSCAPING PROPOSALS:

- Landscaping "demonstrates care and that it matters... there ought to be something to be proud of"
- Balance between privacy from external threats (see "Perceptions of Threats") while not "[hiding] it away from everything"
- "Tall shrubbery and nooks and crannies are part of what I like about it...I wouldn't want the entire park to be 2' high plants"
- Moving thorny plants away from nude areas
- Native plant palette
- Converting western grass loop into a "more direct and active part of the park"
- Replace/remove dying tree on North end of upper tier
- Add heartier groundcover
- Remove "concrete bench" on lower tier due to erosion concerns
- Add new sand to lower tier for greater comfort
- Communal planting area
- Storage box for gardening tools

**Figure 5.40:** Proposed Landscaping Changes. Survey and interview respondents voiced interest or disinterest in a list of landscaping proposals for DB Park. Respondents also proposed new changes.

### Findings: Proposed Enforcement Changes

For the next category, respondents were asked about proposed enforcement changes at DB Park. These responses are shown in **Figure 5.39**. Like each of the other categories, these proposals were collected from stakeholders' websites including FoDB, Denny Blaine Park for All, and the City of Seattle. When asked whether they wanted an increased presence of park rangers or increased parking enforcement, the majority (61%) of respondents did not, roughly a quarter (23-29%) were neutral, and less than a quarter (10-16%) wanted more rangers or parking enforcement. As I described in the "Safety, Threats, and Resistance" theme and shown in **Figure 5.32-5.33**, several parkgoers directly opposed enforcement from park rangers at DB Park. One respondent stated that "park rangers and police are not educated properly on nudity laws and have historically caused more harm than good," a sentiment echoed by another parkgoer who stated "park rangers do not increase safety" and "impact who feels comfortable" at DB Park. Given that the majority of respondents opposed these enforcement changes, and paired with powerful stances in opposition to enforcement, an increase in the presence of park rangers or parking enforcement at DB Park is not recommended. As previously discussed, these enforcement and surveillance measures do not support queerness and queer belonging at DB Park.

When asked if they would like to have DB Park be nude-friendly throughout the park, the majority (97%) of respondents wanted that change. Conversely, when asked if they'd like to have "clothing required" and "clothing optional" zones, the majority (84%) of participants did not want that requirement. These responses align with how respondents perceived the abatement fence as a detrimental threat to DB Park's sense of belonging, since the fence currently splits the park into clothing optional versus clothing required zones. Removing the abatement fence, due to its conflict with queerness and queer belonging, was a design consideration for DB Park.

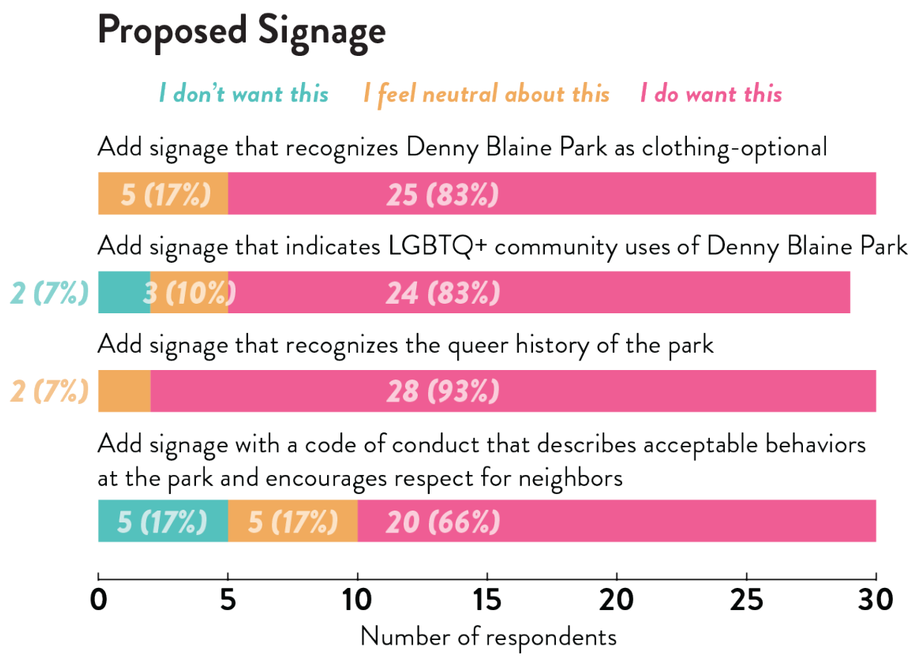



**Figure 5.41:** Proposed Signage. Survey and interview respondents voiced interest or disinterest in a list of proposed signage for DB Park. Although the majority of participants were interested in each signage type, some parkgoers had concerns for each.

## ARGUMENTS FOR/AGAINST SIGNAGE:

### Recognizes Denny Blaine Park as clothing-optional

"Signage indicating nudity zones ***erodes the strength of the Seattle nudity laws***"

"Sign recognizing that Denny Blaine is a nude beach would indicate that the ***local government is no longer conspiring*** with rich fascists to purge the 'disgusting queer poors' and ***forcibly gentrify the area***"

### Indicates LGBTQ+ community uses and history of Denny Blaine Park

"Officially naming it an lgbtq space may also have negative repercussions... ***Queer identity does not always apply to many of the most marginalized people in our community***."

"Once it's designated [as a queer space] ***it emphasizes that culture and protects it***"

### Code of conduct

No "'acceptable behaviors' laid out in signage. This ***opens the door for more criminalization of queer people, bodies, and behaviors.*** Stop criminalizing queer people!!"

"When you have places like Denny Blaine, it's not just about the park, it's an indicator that queer people belong in this city. They're a part of it, and no one should harass them. It supports concepts like ***code of conduct, like if you see somebody different you don't need to insert yourself in their business, you can just leave them alone and they can peacefully do whatever they want to do***."

### Findings: Proposed Landscaping Changes

The majority of respondents were in favor of landscaping changes at DB Park, including improving landscaping (57%), improving grass on the middle level (63%), and replacing invasive thorny blackberry bushes with native plants (79%). Through conversations with participants, and observations of how parkgoers' utilize and enjoy the beach, I have come to appreciate DB Park as a space where people sunbathe with friends and alone, and relax on both the grass/sand. With its small footprint, the park can become crowded due to its popularity in the summer as shown in **Figure 5.40**. I believe it's important to maintain plenty of space for these types of activities. However, there is an opportunity to improve the DB Park's landscaping in a way that preserves its existing use for lounging, leisure, and gathering. Respondents additionally recommended several landscaping proposals for DB Park shown in **Figure 5.40**. For reimagined DB Park designs, I considered making landscaping changes that would enhance DB Park's existing character while maintaining its functionality to parkgoers.

### Findings: Proposed Signage

Respondents were asked to indicate interest in a list of signage proposals for DB Park, shown in **Figure 5.41**. The large majority of respondents were interested in signage recognizing DB Park as clothing-optional (83%), indicating LGBTQ+ community uses of DB Park (83%), and signage that recognizes the queer history of the park (93%). A smaller majority of participants (66%) were interested in having signage with a code of conduct that describes acceptable behaviors at the park and encourages respect for neighbors. Five respondents (17%) were opposed to having a code of conduct sign.

Although a majority of participants (66-93%) were interested in each type of signage, some participants held strong views against each type of signage. For those in favor of clothing-optional signage, they felt it was a sign of the city acting in alignment with queer and nudist parkgoers and resisting gentrification of the area. Those opposed argued signage would "erode the strength of Seattle nudity laws." According to current

laws regarding nudity, people can be nude at any beach in Seattle so long as they don't infringe on the Indecent Exposure Law (RCW 9A.88.010). This respondent had concerns that signage about nudity at DB Park may lead people to believe nudity is not permitted at other beaches and parks. Balancing both perspectives, I believe that signage can be incorporated into DB Park that both designates the park as a clothing-optional space, and simultaneously emphasizes that nudity is legal at other parks in Seattle. I planned on incorporating such signage in the next phase of design iterations for the park.

Respondents also held opposing views regarding signage about queer community uses and history of DB Park. A parkgoer in favor of the signage stated how it can "emphasize [queer] culture and protect it." However, a parkgoer in opposition was worried about how the word "queer" does not encapsulate all non-heterosexual and non-cisgender individuals, stating "queer identity does not always apply to many of the most marginalized people in our community." Due to the large percentage of respondents in favor of queer historical/cultural signage at the park, I planned on incorporating such elements into the next design phase. However, I intended to be thoughtful with what language I use in such signage. I hoped to describe DB Park's history, culture, and community in a way that includes those who past and presently shape the park, with particular attention to those most marginalized in the community.

There were also differing views held by participants on having code of conduct signage. One respondent in favor of a code of conduct described how it may support queer belonging and reduce harassment by encouraging people to "leave alone" individuals who are different from themselves, fostering peaceful coexistence and enjoyment of the park. Those in opposition to a code of conduct did not want "'acceptable behaviors' laid out in signage," stating that "this opens the door for more criminalization of queer people, bodies, and behaviors. Stop criminalizing queer people!" Of all the signage types, a code of conduct was least popular, although a majority (66%) of respondents still wanted such signage. As I've come to learn about DB Park and listen to parkgoers' concerns about enforcement, I find personal resonance with worries about signage enabling criminalization of queer people at the park. However, I believe that a "code of conduct" that uplifts queerness and queer belonging is possible. Returning to the precedent of Jacob Riis Park in New York, jah elyse sayer's signage for this historic queer beach provides an example of such affirmational signage. As aforementioned, sayers' signage states (Alfonseca et al. 2024, 3:08):

NOTICE. The People's Beach at Jacob Riis Park is a
Queer Space. You may:
Make new friends
Meet your next lover
Build community and power
Run into your ex

Rather than having a "code of conduct" that negatively restricts queer bodies, sayers' sign presents possible ways that people can act in joy, community, and freedom at the beach. For the next phase of design, I planned on incorporating affirmational signage into DB Park.

**Findings: Keep Denny Blaine Weird**

When asked whether participants wanted changes to be made at DB Park, 81% of respondents were in favor while 3 respondents (11%) stated they did not want changes. While this was not an initial category listed on the survey/interviews, respondents' also voiced a desire to "keep Denny Blaine weird" as seen in **Figure 5.42**. One survey respondent elaborated on concerns they have with changes to DB Park, stating worries that "making it 'nicer' may end up ruining the space," and that the park shouldn't be "[tamed] down for safety/comfort considerations... sanitizing the space for popular consumption is a bad idea." In summary, this participant wanted DB Park to be left alone, allowing it to stay "weird" and "rough around the edges." Although the majority of respondents wanted changes at DB Park, hearing concerns about "sanitization" of the space was valuable. Landscaping and design changes can have unintended consequences of gentrification or displacement if a space becomes more desirable for popular consumption (Anguelovski et al. 2022, para. 9). Fears about the displacement of queer communities resulting from improvements to DB Park are reasonable. However, I would not propose any changes to DB Park that I believed posed a threat to queer or nudist communities. My central value for this project is to offer designs for the park that amplify queerness and queer belonging. Any changes proposed to DB Park in terms of accessibility, amenities, enforcement, landscaping, and signage must be carefully considered with queerness in mind. Still, regardless of my intention as a designer, there is always a chance that changes to DB Park could have negative consequences to queer community and belonging. In order to reduce these risks, I practiced a process of community-driven design through site reading, a survey, and interviews with queer parkgoers. The goal of this process was to center queer interests, needs, and expertise, ultimately implementing the concept that there is "nothing about us without us" (Costanza-Chock 2020, 93; Charlton 1998, 3).

**Takeaways: Design Considerations and Proposals**

In the Design Considerations and Proposals theme, participants shared their interests in a variety of design proposals, and generated new ideas for improvements at DB Park. Some ideas recommended by respondents in **Figures 5.37-5.40** were not carried forward into the following list. Ideas were not carried forward for two main reasons. First, the want/need was fulfilled by another design takeaway. Second, other ideas were more central in addressing the Principles and Program identified in Chapter 6. The list below only shows takeaways that were incorporated into DB Park redesigns shown in Chapter 6.

- Gathering, Solitude, and Open-ended Spaces: Spaces for parkgoers' various activities and needs; remove thorny plants from nude areas; remove "concrete bench" on lower tier due to erosion concerns
- Affirmational Signage: Signage celebrating 2SLGBTQIA+ history and present use of the park; recognizing the park as nude-friendly; reinforcing shared park values
- Essential Needs: Permanent restroom; drinking fountains; showers; trash receptacles; fire pit
- Accessibility: Multimodal transportation to DB Park; accessible parking; ADA accessible ramps throughout park; improved amenities; crosswalk on E Lake Washington Blvd; improved seating
- Safety: Use landscaping to buffer effects of surveillance/enforcement; remove dying tree on upper tier
- Learning and Participation: Landscaping and/or educational opportunities to connect humans with more-than-humans at DB Park; native plant palette; public art; bulletin board

## TAKEAWAYS: COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

In order to learn what queer community members want or need in DB Park, I performed a process of community engagement that consisted of site reading, a survey, and interviews. Through site reading, I aimed to directly engage with DB Park and the beings that enjoy it. Weaving the wooden frames gave me time to observe and reflect upon the ways the park is inhabited, used, and enjoyed by humans and more-than-humans. Forming more immediate and personal connections with the landscape gave me greater appreciation for the multiplicity of beings present on-site, and ways in which they were interconnected to myself and other parkgoers. The insights I gained from site reading led to considerations for DB Park's future redesigns.

While site reading lent valuabe insights, my engagement with queer parkgoers was more significant in shaping future design proposals. Since parkgoers have spent countless hours enjoying, stewarding, and protecting DB Park, their wants, needs, and desires for its future were the foundation of DB Park's redesigns. In order to collaborate with human community members, I led a survey and interviews with self-identified queer parkgoers. After coding and analysis, I organized the data into four themes: Multiplicity and Freedom; Connection and Community; Safety, Threats, and Resistance; Design Considerations and Proposals. As shown in these four themes, parkgoers had powerful insights on DB Park's significance as a space of freedom for its diverse users, as a space to connect with the park and queer community, and as a space of safety where parkgoers resisted threats to queerness and belonging. They additionally described interest, or lack thereof, in an array of design proposals for the park. Through the survey and interviews, a variety of design takeaways emerged for DB Park's future redesigns.

Importantly, the takeaways from community engagement were the foundation for the redesign's principles and program. I particularly emphasized the four themes that emerged from survey and interviews to establish the principles and program. In doing so, I aimed to prioritize parkgoers' interests, wants, and needs in DB Park's future. The principles and program are incorporated into each DB Park redesign. These proposed reimaginations of DB Park are introduced and explored next in Chapter 6.

"I feel concerned that even the idea of ***making it 'nicer' there may end up ruining the space***"

In regards to landscaping, three respondents stated to "***leave it as it was***"

## "Keep Denny Blaine weird"

"Let's let it ***stay rough around the edges. Keep Denny Blaine weird*** or whatever, ***not try and make it aesthetically more palatable to the people trying to kill it*** or the people who just heard about it"

"I kind of think it should ***stay this way rather than tame it down*** for safety/comfort considerations... ***sanitizing the space for popular consumption is a bad idea***"

**Figure 5.42:** "Keep Denny Blaine Weird." Some survey/interview respondents desired to keep DB Park "weird," and voiced concerns with changes "ruining the space."

# *Queer Designs for Denny Blaine Park*

06



The design proposals developed for the thesis are a culmination of my learning and research about DB Park, its users, and queer/queering design. Chapter 1 detailed the OWW crisis we face today, and proposed how queerness strives for more just futures through non-normativity, collectivism, and multiplicity. Chapter 2 argued why queer spaces, queer design, and queer belonging matter to mental, physical, and community well-being. In Chapter 3, a history and context of DB Park was provided to illuminate the site's significance to queer and nudist community members, and the complex dynamics between conflicting stakeholders including parkgoers, FoDB, Denny Blaine Park for All, Stuart Sloan and other property owners, and the City of Seattle. This chapter also documents the on-going advocacy from community organizers to protect the park as a queer and nudist space against surveillance, enforcement, and a pending lawsuit. Chapter 4 aimed to answer one of the research questions for this thesis: How can design be done queerly? Through an exploration of Queered Design, Queerly Designed, and Queering Design precedents, several strategies were identified as queer design methods. The strategies included material reuse, queer planting design, universal design, and affirmational signage. Finally, Chapter 5 delved into community engagement to answer the final research question: what do queer community members want or need in Denny Blaine Park? Through the survey, interviews, and site reading, four themes emerged that would guide the design of this thesis. These themes were "Multiplicity and Freedom," "Connection and Community," "Safety, Threats, and Resistance," and "Design Considerations and Proposals." Chapter 6 now builds upon the research, experience, and insight gathered to create three design proposals for DB Park.

Before digging into design work, I first conducted conventional site analysis of DB Park. Takeaways from conventional site analysis were considered in parallel with analysis of first-hand experience from the woven site reading frames described in Chapter 5 to develop a list of design considerations for DB Park. Following this, I created principles and program as well as a design concept for DB Park. The principles and program were derived from analysis of community engagement responses from the survey and interviews. Queer methods identified in Chapter 4 of material reuse, queer planting design, universal design, and affirmational signage were the inspiration in developing an overarching concept for the design proposals. The

principles, program, and concept were the foundation for three design proposals for DB Park. Each of the design proposals is detailed in this chapter. Explorations of the site analysis, principles, program, and concept provide context and reasoning for design decisions in each of the three design proposals to redesign DB Park.

## SITE ANALYSIS

**Figures 6.1-6.16** describe aspects of site analysis for DB Park ranging from regional to site scales. Accompanying each of the images are key observations and takeaways which informed DB Park's reimagined design proposals.



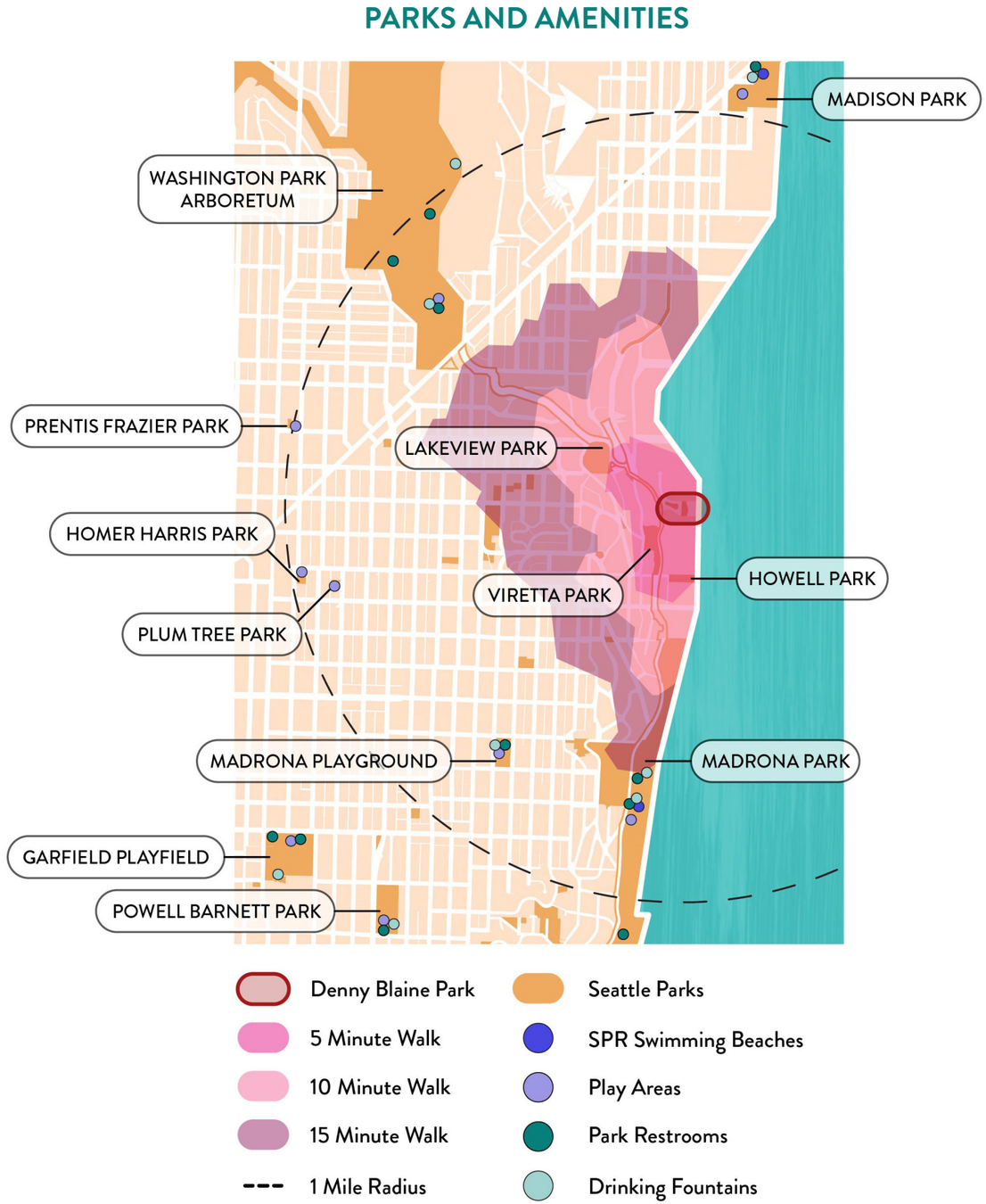



**Figure 6.1:** Parks and Amenities. Numerous play areas are within a 1-mile radius of DB Park, providing further argument against the failed playground proposal. DB Park lacks amenities present at other parks, such as restrooms and drinking fountains. GIS Data Sources: City of Seattle ArcGIS Online 2026a, 2026b, 2026c, 2026d, 2026f, 2026l.

## TRANSPORTATION CORRIDORS

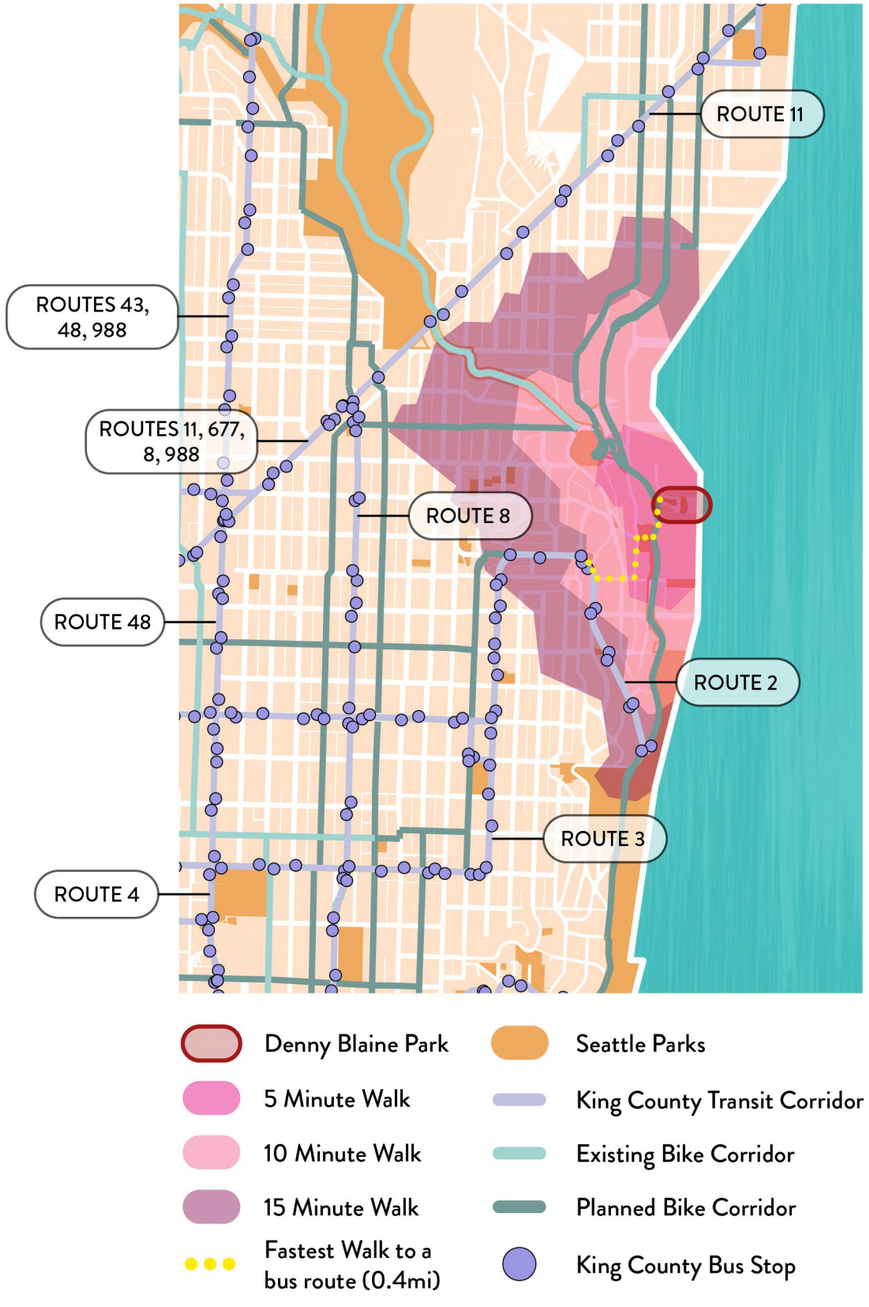



**Figure 6.2:** Transportation Corridors. The closest bus stop is a 10 minute walk away from DB Park, and only services one route. A bike corridor is planned near DB Park. GIS Data Sources: City of Seattle ArcGIS Online 2026b, 2026c, 2026g; King County 2026a, 2026b.



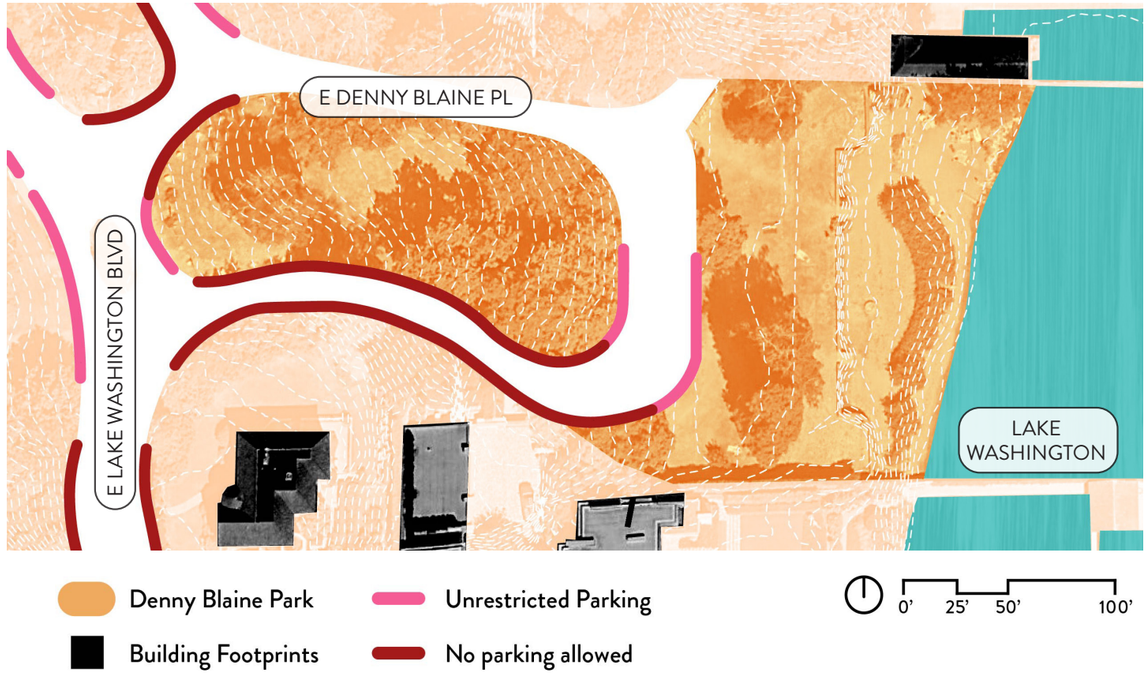



**Figure 6.3:** Parking Restrictions. Parking restrictions limit available parking. Although the northern side of E Denny Blaine Pl is painted red, Seattle GIS maps do not indicate this as a “no parking allowed” area. Reimagined designs for DB Park will consider parking along that curb. GIS Data Sources: City of Seattle ArcGIS Online 2026e.

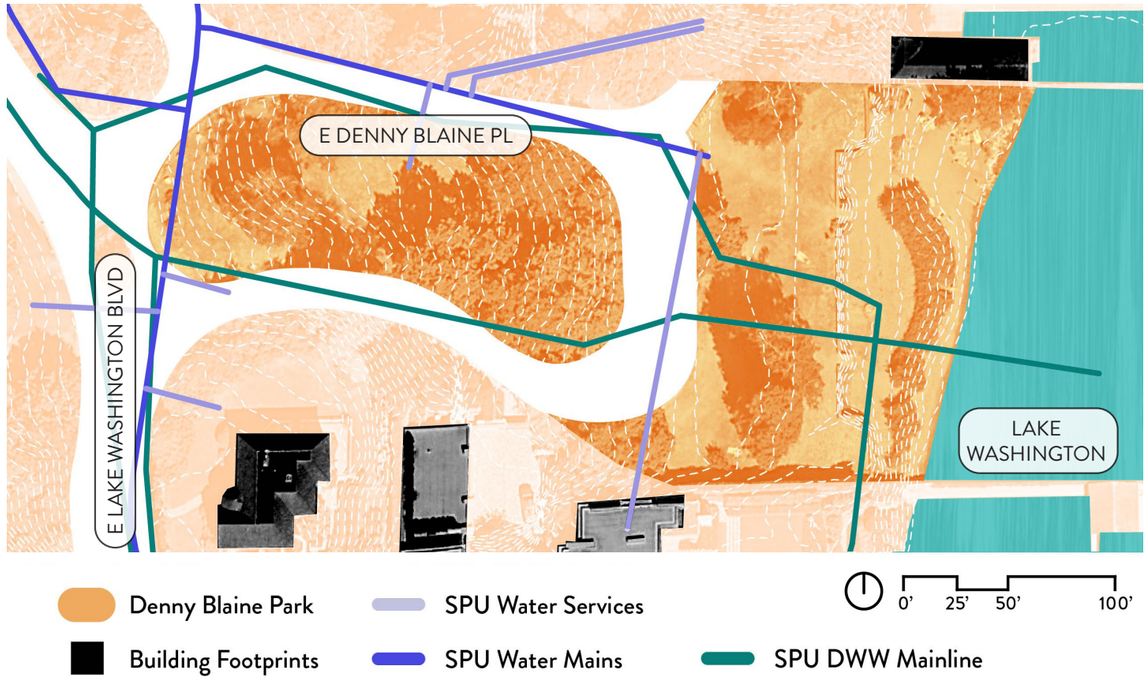



**Figure 6.4:** Water Mains and Services. Existing water mains offer opportunities for restrooms, showers, and drinking fountains. GIS Data Sources: City of Seattle ArcGIS Online 2026j, 2026k.

# CIRCULATION




## Observations

- need to use stairs to enter
- parkgoers use south end of beach for solitude and north end for gathering
- grass is dead from use between staircases
- rarely saw parkgoers walking through the upper loop

## Takeaways

- add ADA accessible paths
- maintain space for solitude and gathering
- improve connection between upper loop and three tiers

**Figure 6.5:** Circulation Map for DB Park. Aerial Image Source: “Google Earth”, July 2024.

## SITE FEATURES




**Figure 6.6:** Site Features Map for DB Park. Aerial Image Source: “Google Earth”, July 2024.

### Observations

- no ADA parking spots
- limited bike rack space (4)
- stairs divide each tier
- only one Porta Potty

### Takeaways

- add ADA parking spots
- add bike racks
- add permanent bathroom

# DRAINAGE




## Observations

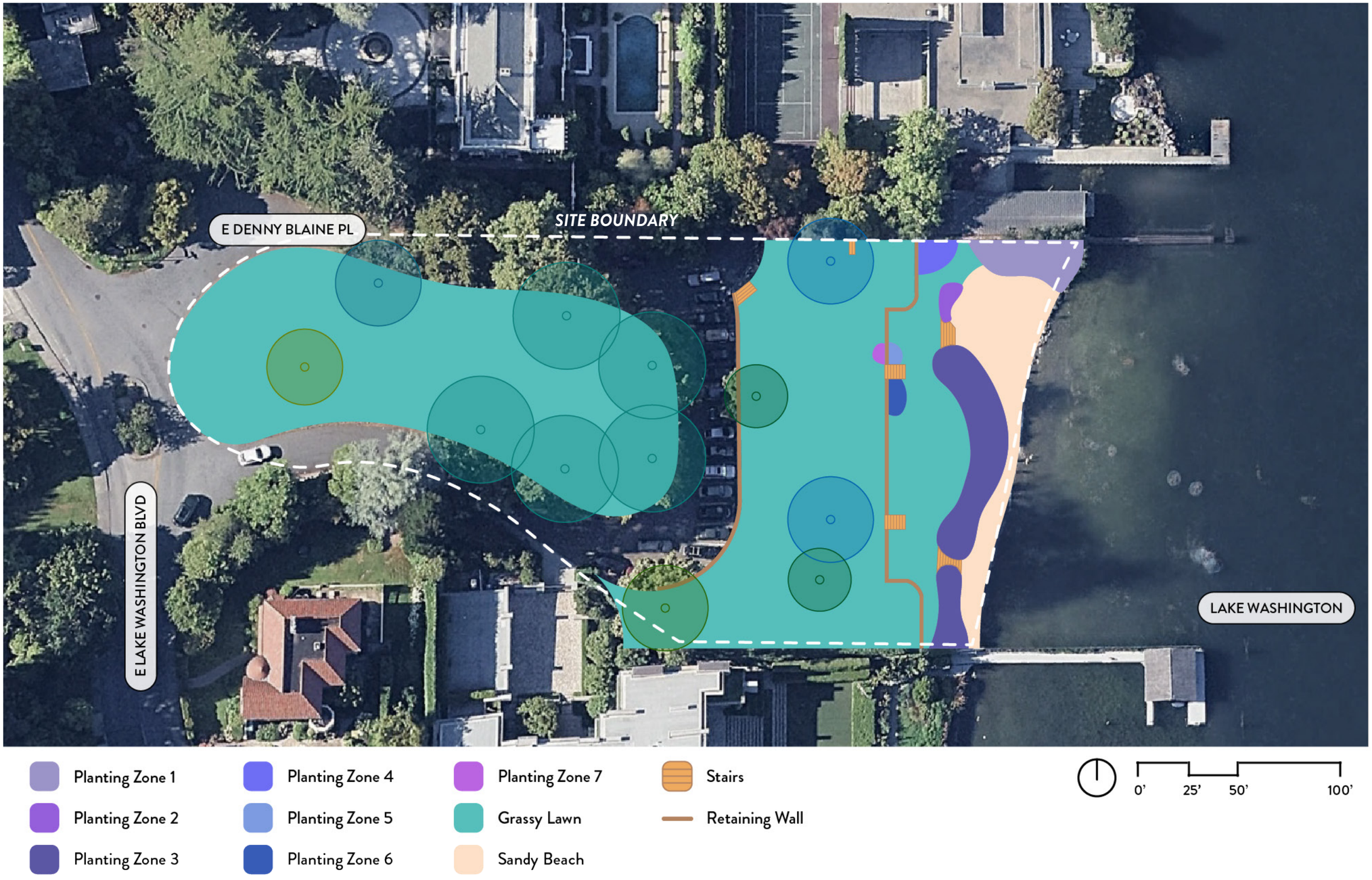
- water drains from E Lk Washington Blvd toward Lake Washington
- pools created from foot traffic

## Takeaways

- maintain drainage to Lake Washington
- improve surface material for pathways so they don’t erode

**Figure 6.7:** Drainage Map for DB Park. Aerial Image Source: “Google Earth”, July 2024. Contours created from King County Point Cloud Data. Data Source: Washington State Department of Natural Resources 2021.

# EXISTING PLANTING




## Observations

- lots of native plants supporting birds and pollinators
- Nootka Rose and Himalayan Blackberry are thorny and close to nude sunbathing areas
- edibles/herbs possibly planted by parkgoers

## Takeaways

- incorporate more native and queer plants
- less thorny plants near nude zones
- areas for parkgoers to plant and steward vegetation

**Figure 6.8:** Existing Planting Map for DB Park. Aerial Image Source: “Google Earth”, July 2024.

## EXISTING PLANTING ZONES

### PLANTING ZONE 1

*Salix discolor / Pussy Willow*
*Crataegus douglasii / Black Hawthorne*
*Rosa nutkana / Nootka Rose*
*Melissa officinalis / Lemon Balm
*Conyza canadensis / Horseweed*
Tanacetum parthenium / Feverfew

### PLANTING ZONE 2

Verbascum thapsus / Common Mullein
Erodium moschatum / Musky Stork's Bill
*Conyza canadensis / Horseweed*
*Rosa nutkana / Nootka Rose*
*Melissa officinalis / Lemon Balm

### PLANTING ZONE 3

*Rosa nutkana / Nootka Rose*
*Rubus parviflorus / Thimbleberry*
*Cornus sericea / Red Osier Dogwood*
Dicranum scoparium / Broom Forkmoss
*Melissa officinalis / Lemon Balm
Geranium molle / Dove's Foot
*Rubus bifrons / Himalayan Blackberry*
*Hedera helix/ English Ivy*
*Symphoricarpos albus / Snowberry*
Cardamine hirsuta / Hairy bittercress
Scirpus microcarpus / Wood Club Rush
*Juncus effusus / Common Rush*
Acer palmatum / Japanese Maple
*Mahonia aquifolium / Tall Oregon Grape*
Prunus laurocerasus / Cherry laurel
Conyza canadensis / Horseweed
**Achillea millefeolium / Common Yarrow*
**Allium cernuum / Nodding onion*
**Camassia quamash / Common camas*
**Fragaria chiloensis / Beach strawberry*
**Fritillaria lanceolata / Chocolate Lily*
**Penstemon serrulatus / Cascade Penstemon*
**Symphyotrichum subspicatum / Douglas aster*
**Viola adunca / Prairie Violet*
**Holodiscus discolor / Oceanspray*
**Philadelphus lewisii / Mock Orange*
**Ribes sanguineum / Red flowering currant*
**Spirea betulifolia / White Spirea
***Arbutus menziesii / Pacific Madrone*

### PLANTING ZONE 4

Pinus sp. / Pine Tree
Conyza canadensis / Horseweed
Leucanthemum superbum / Shasta Daisy
*Rosa nutkana / Nootka Rose*
*Origanum vulgare / Oregano
*Borago officinalis / Borage
*Amelanchier alnifolia / Western Serviceberry*

### PLANTING ZONE 5

*Mentha longifolia / Horsemint
*Mentha spicata / Spearmint
*Mentha suaveolens / Apple Mint
*Mahonia aquifolium / Tall Oregon Grape*
*Tellima grandiflora / Fragrant Fringecup*
Forsythia x intermedia / Border Forsythia
Conyza canadensis / Horseweed

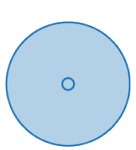
### PLANTING ZONE 6

*Rubus parviflorus / Thimbleberry*
Geranium molle / Dove's Foot
Erodium moschatum / Musky Stork's Bill
Tanacetum parthenium / Feverfew

### PLANTING ZONE 7

Rosa chinensis / China Rose

## LARGE TREES



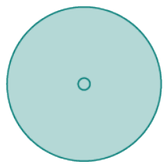
Betula pendula / Silver Birch



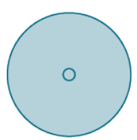
Cryptomeria japonica / Japanese Cedar



Tilia cordata / Littleleaf Linden



Tilia americana / American Linden



Prunus x pugetensis / Cherry Hybrid



Betula sp. / Birch Tree

*Blue text = PNW native plant*

*Purple text = noxious weed in WA State*

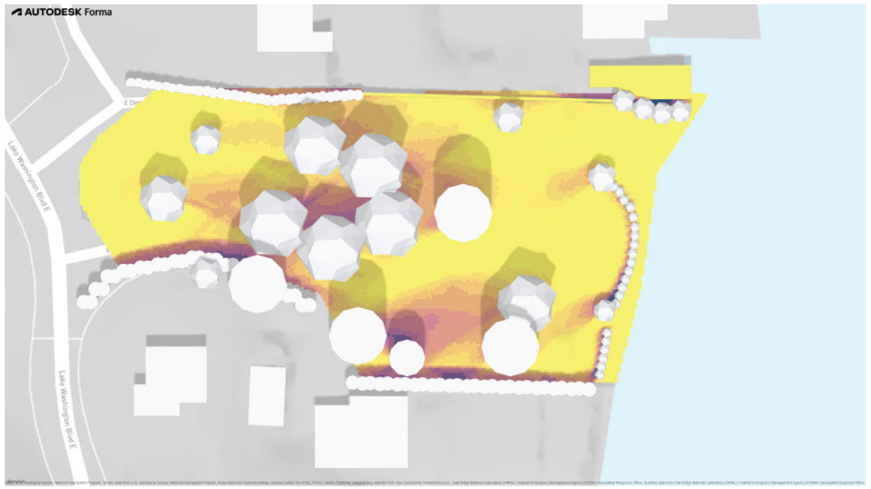
** = edible or herb*

*** = plants were listed on a planting plan provided by Friends of Denny Blaine. I was not able to locate these plants on site visits***

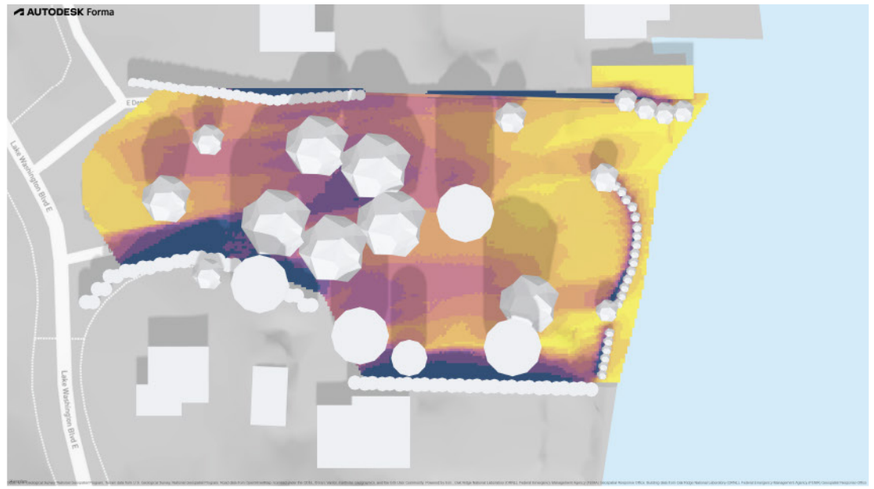
**Figure 6.9:** Existing Planting Zones in DB Park.

# SOLAR ANALYSIS

## Summer Solstice (June 21)

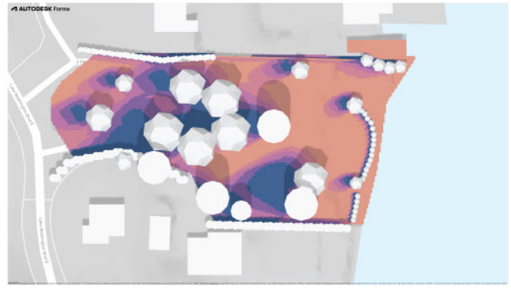



## Fall Equinox (Sept 22)

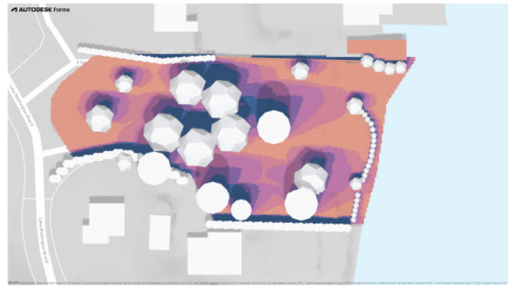



## Fall Equinox Temp Intervals

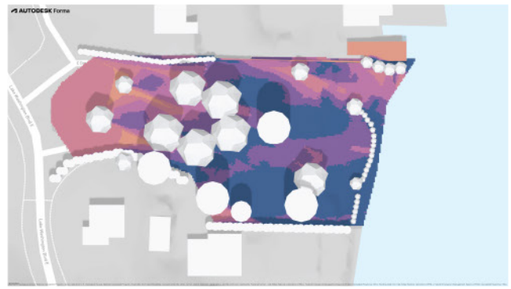
8am - 12pm



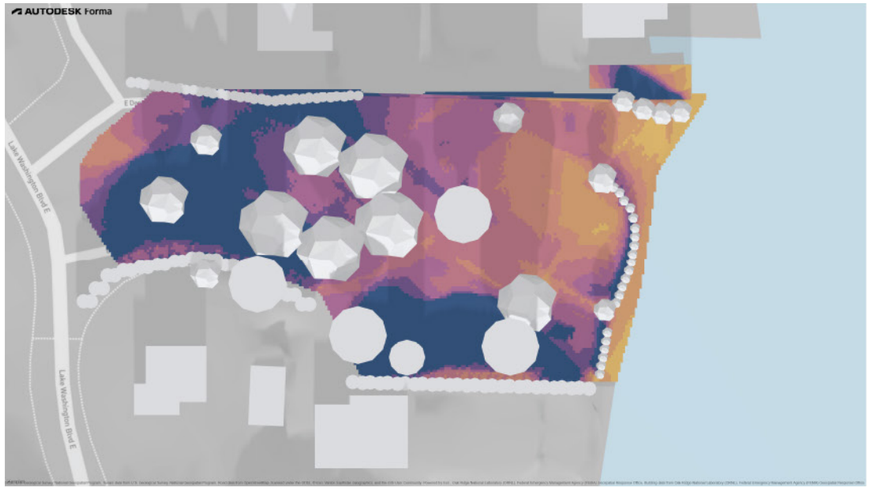

12pm - 4pm



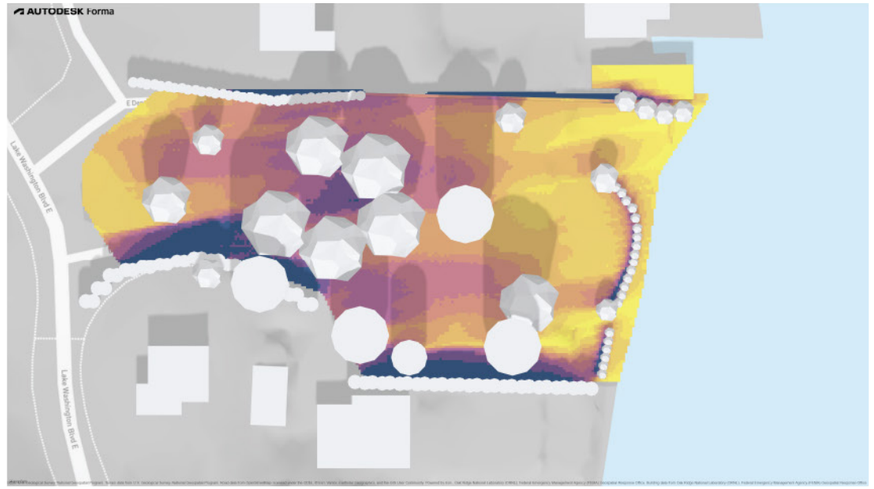

4pm - 8pm




## Winter Solstice (Dec 21)




## Spring Equinox (Mar 20)




## Observations

- lower and middle tier have 8+ hours of sun in summer, fall and spring
- upper tier and upper loop receive most shade

## Takeaways

- maintain sunbathing space on lower tiers
- create opportunities for sun and shade accessible to all beachgoers
- full sun tolerant plants required in lower tiers

**Figure 6.10:** Solar Analysis for DB Park. Source: "Forma Site Design" 2026.

# ENTRY FROM LAKE WASHINGTON BLVD




Aerial Image Source: “Google Earth”, July 2024.

0' 25' 50' 100'

## Observations

- neighbors have walls, fences or tall hedges between residence and park/street
- several cameras point into street/ park
- E Denny Blaine Pl is a narrow two-way road

## Takeaways

- consider planting buffer to offer parkgoers privacy from cameras
- maintain access to neighbors’ driveways



















**Figure 6.11:** Entry from Lake Washington Blvd.

# FORMAL AND INFORMAL ENTRANCES




Aerial Image Source: “Google Earth”, July 2024.

0' 25' 50' 100'

## Observations

- one formal entry with stairs; hard to locate upon arrival
- people hop curb on south side of parking lot to enter
- pooling water in front of stairs

## Takeaways

- consider making a more formal, inviting, and visible entry
- make entry ADA accessible
- more durable vegetation/surface material to prevent erosion on high-traffic routes
















**Figure 6.12:** Formal and Informal Entrances.

# UPPER LOOP




Aerial Image Source: “Google Earth”, July 2024.

## Observations

- mature American Linden (Tilia americana) and Birch trees (Betula pendula; Betula sp.)
- rocks prevent cars parking on the grass lawn
- currently used as a passing-through space for parkgoers

## Takeaways

- preserve mature trees in design proposals
- remove rocks to create more inviting atmosphere; preserve loop through landscaping and programming
- consider activating upper loop through connection to tiers













**Figure 6.13:** Site Photos of Upper Loop at DB Park.

## UPPER TIER




Aerial Image Source: “Google Earth”, July 2024.

0' 25' 50' 100'

### Observations

- mature Silver birch (Betula pendula) and Japanese cedar trees (Cryptomeria japonica)
- birch on north end dying
- abatement fence divides park into clothing optional and required areas
- only restroom is a Porta Potty

### Takeaways

- preserve mature trees in design proposals
- remove dying birch tree
- remove abatement fence to make entire park nude-friendly
- add permanent restroom







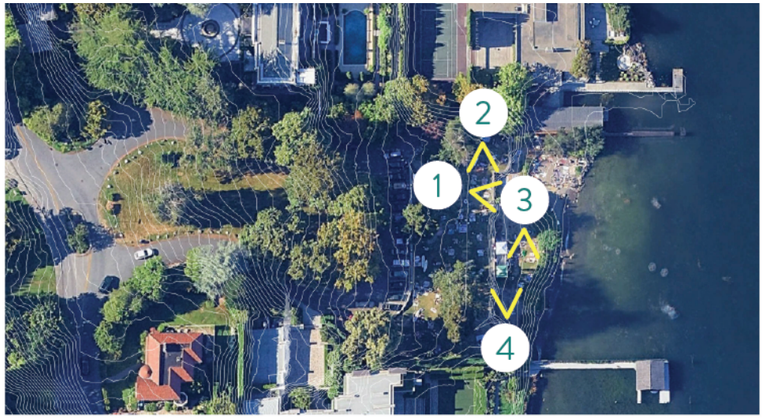






**Figure 6.14:** Site Photos of Upper Tier at DB Park.

# MIDDLE TIER




Aerial Image Source: “Google Earth”, July 2024.

0' 25' 50' 100'

## Observations

- stairs down to lower beach tier
- patchy grass lawn
- Nootka rose and Himalayan blackberry visually buffer lower tier

## Takeaways

- consider ADA accessible pathways to beach
- heartier groundcover or lawn
- consider removing thorny shrubs while still maintaining visual buffer to lower tier













**Figure 6.15:** Site Photos of Middle Tier at DB Park.

## LOWER TIER




Aerial Image Source: “Google Earth”, July 2024.

### Observations

- larger beach area on north end
- shrubs offer privacy to south end
- thorny shrubs along beach
- beach is entirely sand; those with mobility aid or textile preferences don’t have alternative seating options near water

### Takeaways

- maintain areas for sunbathing, gathering, and solitude
- preserve planting buffer between lower and middle tier; replace existing thorny vegetation with native and/or queer shrubs
- consider adding beach wheelchair mat to improve accessibility and have varied ground materials for sunbathing













**Figure 6.16:** Site Photos of Lower Tier at DB Park.

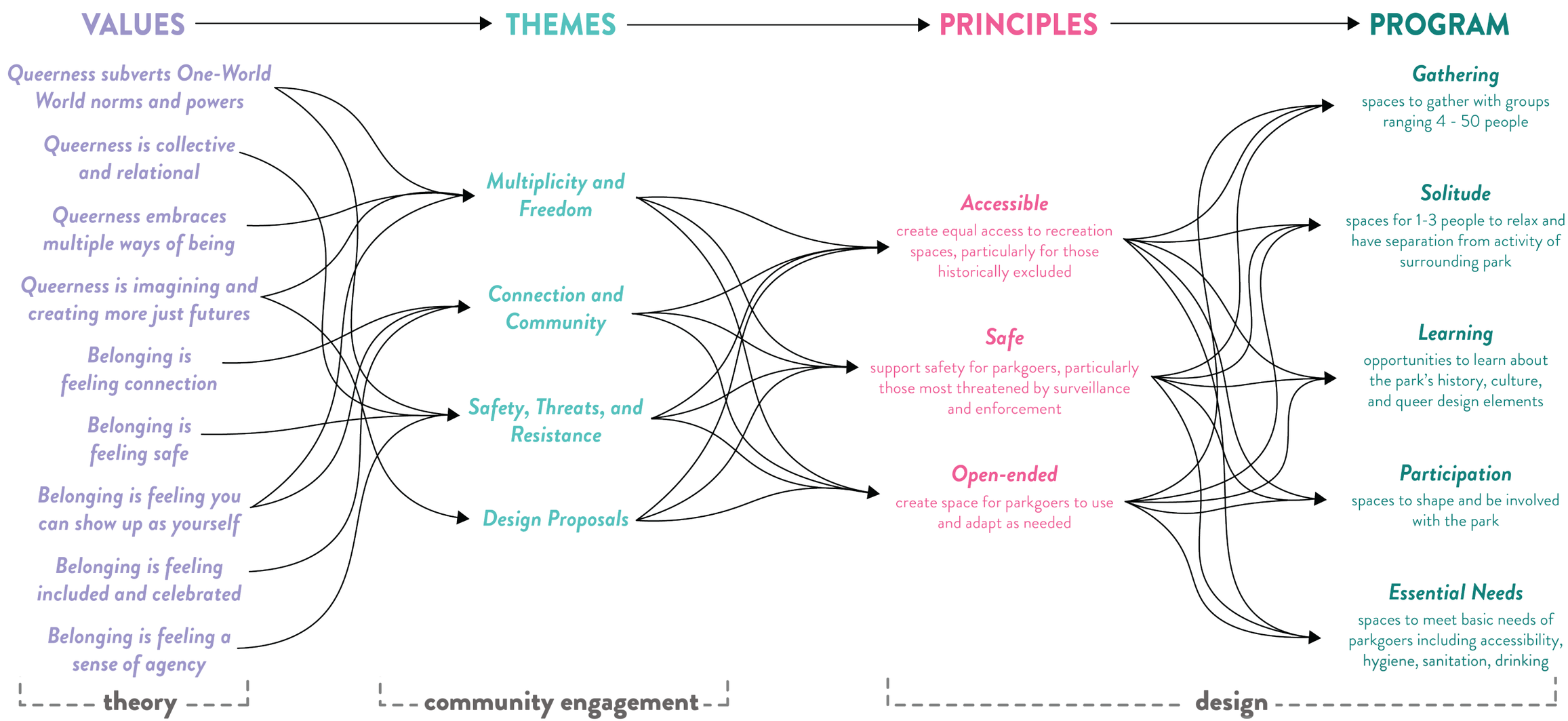



**Figure 6.17:** Principles and Program. The principles and program for DB Park's redesign were based on values of queerness and belonging, as well as themes that emerged from community engagement.

## PRINCIPLES AND PROGRAM

The principles and program for DB Park's designs were derived from analysis of community engagement that had been coded through values queerness and belonging. In the first column of **Figure 6.17**, the definitions of queerness and belonging identified in Chapters 1 and 2 are restated. Since my thesis' goal was to support queerness and queer belonging in DB Park, these values have been central to each step of the work. The values were then used to code the survey and interviews with queer parkgoers, creating the four themes shown in column two of **Figure 6.17**. These themes, covered in Chapter 5, were prominent perspectives, experiences, wants, and needs that parkgoers voiced during community engagement. Moving into the design phase of this project, my goal was to ground DB Park's redesigns in community interests. I therefore created three design principles of accessibility, safety, and open-endedness which directly responded to, supported, or uplifted the four themes of community engagement. These principles and their definitions are shown in column three of **Figure 6.17**, and elaborated upon below. Finally, I used these principles to develop programmatic elements for DB Park shown in column four of **Figure 6.17**. The program included gathering, solitude, learning, participation, and essential needs.

Community insights from the survey and interviews, supplemented with takeaways from precedent studies and site reading, were foundational in creating the principles and program. I wanted to practice community-driven design by centering respondents' wants, needs, and desires. Simultaneously, I built upon that knowledge with lessons learned from precedents and my own experiences of site reading. Below, I describe how each of the design principles are founded upon themes from community engagement. Then, I illustrate how the proposed programming is related to each of the three design principles.

## Principles

### PRINCIPLE 1: ACCESSIBLE

***Goal:*** Create equal access to recreation spaces, particularly for those historically excluded.

***Foundation in community engagement:*** Accessibility is related to each of the four community engagement themes. First, for Multiplicity and Freedom, prioritizing accessibility results in a design with equitable opportunities for parkgoers of all ability levels to use and enjoy DB Park. Second, in terms of Connection and Community, using a lens of accessibility ensures parkgoers of all ability levels will be welcomed and able to use the park, opening connections to the space and to broader (queer and nudist) community. Third, accessibility supports Safety and Resistance since parkgoers are able to comfortably traverse the site, and engage in organizing efforts that may take place at DB Park. Last, community members voiced strong desires for improved accessibility in the Design Proposals theme.

### PRINCIPLE 2: SAFE

***Goal:*** Support safety for parkgoers, particularly those most threatened by surveillance and enforcement.

***Foundation in community engagement:*** Safety is related to each of the four themes that arose from community engagement. First, parkgoers must feel safe in order to freely use DB Park. Particularly for those who face greater discrimination or marginalization within the queer community, such as transgender or BIPOC parkgoers, safety against surveillance and enforcement is central to supporting Multiplicity and Freedom. Second, I believe safety is key to Connections and Community at DB Park. As demonstrated through survey data, 78% of respondents felt surveilled at DB Park, which had stopped 28% of respondents from going to the park. I believe surveillance impacts feelings of safety, which in turn reduces park attendance. If parkgoers don't go to DB Park, they are stopped from forming community in the space. Conversely, if parkgoers feel safe to attend, they can form deeper connections with the park and other parkgoers. Third, parkgoers' directly voiced a desire for safety during community engagement. Last, I believe safety is directly related to the Design Proposals theme since it relates to parkgoers' concerns regarding enforcement, wishes for accessibility, and desires for inclusive signage at DB Park.

### PRINCIPLE 3: OPEN-ENDED

***Goal:*** Create space for parkgoers to use and adapt as needed.

***Foundation in community engagement:*** Open-ended design is related to each of the four Themes that arose from community engagement. First, open-endedness supports Multiplicity and Freedom since parkgoers can freely use, claim, organize, and recreate in the park as wanted or needed. Second, open-endedness supports Connection and Community because the park can be widely used and adapted to support a variety of activities conducive to community-building, such as gathering with friends or larger events. Third, an open-ended design supports Safety and Resistance since the design does not restrict people's bodies, behaviors, or methods of protest. Last, open-ended design meets many interests voiced by community members in the Design Proposals theme. For example, community members described a variety of ways in which they currently enjoy using DB Park including sunbathing nude, spending time with others, swimming, spending time alone, attending and organizing events, and more. By having spaces that can be adapted as needed, participants can engage in whatever program they please at the park. Additionally, open-ended design "keeps Denny Blaine weird," a desire voiced by some parkgoers. Open-ended design prevents overly prescriptive uses of the space and creates flexibility to keep the park "rough around the edges."

The three principles of accessibility, safety, and open-ended design were used to create five programmatic elements for DB Park. The program included: gathering, solitude, learning, participation, and essential needs. These programmatic elements guided my spatial design choices at DB Park, and are described next.



## Program

### PROGRAM 1: GATHERING

***Definition:*** Spaces to gather with groups ranging from 4 - 50 people.

***Foundation in principles:*** Gathering is related to each of the three design principles. Accessibility is required to welcome people of all ability levels and identities to gather in the park. Gathering supports safety since groups are able to jointly mobilize against perceived threats at the park. Last, open-ended design can accommodate a variety of group sizes.

### PROGRAM 2: SOLITUDE

***Definition:*** Spaces for 1-3 people to relax and have separation from activity of the surrounding park.

***Foundation in principles:*** Solitude is related to each of the three design principles. Accessibility is required to welcome people of all ability levels and identities to find solitude in the park. Spaces of solitude also make the park more accessible for individuals who want calmer sensory spaces (without auditory or visual inputs from large groups). Safety supports solitude, since parkgoers must have a level of comfortability to leisure alone or in small groups. Solitude also supports safety, since some parkgoers may feel more comfortable using the beach alone rather than in large groups. Last, open-ended design offers opportunities for parkgoers to claim spaces for solitude.

### PROGRAM 3: LEARNING

***Definition:*** Opportunities to learn about the park's history, culture, and queer design elements.

***Foundation in principles:*** Learning is related to each of the three design principles. Learning supports accessibility, since elements such as signage can describe ways in which the park is nude-friendly and culturally queer. Such signage aims to make queer and nude parkgoers feel welcome to the park, supporting their ease of access. Similarly, learning can support safety through elements like signage, where a code of conduct may describe ways in which parkgoers can respect each other at DB Park. Last, learning can be supported by open-ended design elements, where educational materials can encourage parkgoers to use space as needed.

### PROGRAM 4: PARTICIPATION

***Definition:*** Spaces and opportunities to shape and be involved with the park.

***Foundation in principles:*** Participation is related to each of the three design principles. Accessibility supports participation, so that parkgoers of all identities and ability levels can shape DB Park. Safety also supports participation, so parkgoers feel comfortable attending, organizing, and influencing DB Park's culture and environment. Participation conversely supports safety, as organized resistance efforts to protect the park require participation from parkgoers. Last, participation is directly related to open-ended design, as parkgoers can more easily adapt spaces that have flexible use.

### PROGRAM 5: ESSENTIAL NEEDS

***Definition:*** Spaces to meet basic needs including accessibility, hygiene, sanitation, and hydration.

***Foundation in principles:*** Essential Needs are related to each of the three design principles. Essential needs include features such as accessible pathways, seating, and restrooms, since I argue that these are essential to equitable park design. Essential needs allows parkgoers to safely enjoy the park through features like accessible navigation, drinking fountains to prevent dehydration, and showers that support personal wellness through hygiene. Last, essential needs are required for open-ended design, since parkgoers must have basic elements of accessibility, hygiene, and hydration met in order to recreate as they please in the park.

These five programmatic elements - gathering, solitude, learning, participation, and essential needs - will be incorporated in varying degrees into the three DB Park design proposals.

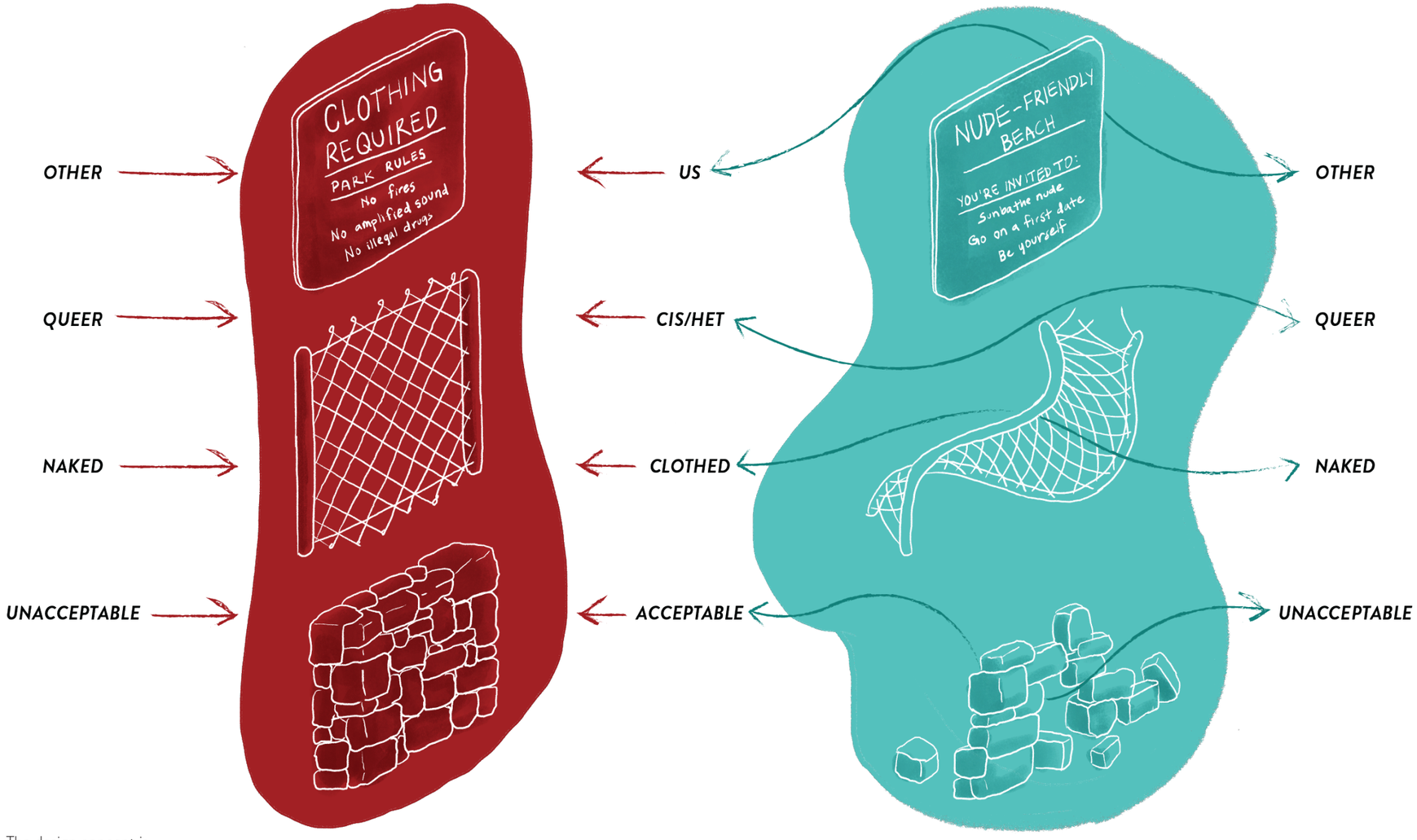



**Figure 6.18:** Breaking Barriers to Belonging. The design concept is focused on ways to break and transform physical and metaphorical divisions to support queers and queer belonging within DB Park.

## CONCEPT: BREAKING BARRIERS TO BELONGING

The concept for the design proposals to redesign DB Park was inspired by the queer design precedents and methods explored in Chapter 4, as well as community engagement and site reading of Chapter 5. These queer methods included universal design, material reuse, queer planting design, and affirmational signage. Taken together, these queer methods informed the concept for DB Park's redesigns: "Breaking Barriers to Belonging."

To return again to the goal of this thesis, the design proposals to redesign DB Park ultimately aim to support queerness and queer belonging. When applying methods of universal design, material reuse, and affirmational signage to DB Park, I began by questioning what barriers to belonging currently exist in the space. From my site readings, site analysis, and community engagement, several existing site elements came to mind. These elements included the abatement fence dividing DB Park into clothing optional and clothing required sections, signage that currently prohibits nudity in the park's upper tier, and the large retaining wall separating the upper from middle tiers. First was the abatement fence. As described by queer survey and interview respondents, the fence feels "insulting and dehumanizing" and "hurts [the park] beyond measure." Eleven of the thirty-one total respondents mentioned the fence as being a perceived threat to queerness or belonging in DB Park as shown in **Figure 5.33**. During my visits, the fence felt obtrusive to the park's beauty, and emblematic of OWW restrictions on queer/nudist bodies. A second barrier to belonging is signage accompanying the abatement fence. This signage states "clothing required west of fence." Survey data reflected how 97% of respondents wanted DB Park to be nude-friendly throughout, with anecdotal evidence reiterating the importance of DB Park as a nude-friendly space. For instance, parkgoers reflected how DB is a space of "radical self expression and body inclusivity," and free from swimsuits that can restrict and gender parkgoers' - particularly transgender parkgoers' - bodies. Last, the retaining walls currently on site prevent belonging. As 5 survey/interview respondents described, DB Park "is

## Reimagined Retaining Wall





Walls can be overcome
Source: Mykura 2017



Walls can be broken
Source: "Ilkley Moor" n.d.



Walls can unify rather than divide
Source: BIERBAUM.AICHELE.landschaftsarchitekten 2003

## Reimagined Abatement Fence





Fences can be beautiful
Source: Sunny Park 2011



Fences can be collaborative
Source: C-D 2013




Fences can be inviting
Source: Van Beneden n.d.

**Figure 6.19:** Material Reuse at DB Park. Breaking Barriers to Belonging through transformations of abatement fences and retaining walls at DB Park.

NOT an accessible park." I believe this is in large part due to retaining walls forcing parkgoers to traverse stairs on site. Through my site reading, I also felt the retaining walls make the park feel very divided, and limit flows of humans/more-than-humans across the site. Having been on crutches myself for several weeks during the thesis, traversing the wall's stairs to access the beach was challenging and felt unsafe. I believe these divisions in the park both physically and symbolically reinforce binaries that historically and presently harm parkgoers and park culture. Restrictive signage, the abatement fence, and retaining walls delineate divisions between "us" vs. "them", "cis/het" vs. "queer", "clothed" vs. "naked", and "acceptable" vs. "unacceptable".

Studying these elements, I decided to explore ways they could be transformed to uplift rather than subvert belonging. In order to do so, I turned to the queer methods explored in Chapter 4: universal design, material reuse, queer planting design, and affirmational signage. By reimagining these elements, I hoped that binaries between us/other, queer/cis/het, clothed/naked, and acceptable/unacceptable could be blurred or broken as shown in **Figure 6.18**. As they currently stand, these walls, fences, and signage are divisive, generating mistrust, animosity, and harm to queer communities. By breaking these barriers, I believe queerness and queer belonging can be emplaced and embraced in DB Park. When considering how the existing abatement fence, signage, and retaining walls can be reimagined, the precedent studies and queer methods provided inspiration and guidance. These transformations are shown in **Figures 6.19-6.20**, and described next.

### Reimagined Retaining Wall

If the retaining wall dividing the upper tier from the middle tier were partially or fully removed, I believe the stones could be reused in various ways throughout DB Park to support belonging. Smaller walls could be built that have plants/paths cross over or through them, demonstrating how walls can be overcome by humans and more-than-humans. Having walls traversable by humans and more-than-humans lends a sense of agency to parkgoers, giving them the power and choice to

# Welcome!

*You are entering Denny Blaine Park, a beloved queer and nude recreation space. This park has been a place of freedom, joy, and belonging for 2SLGBTQIA+ parkgoers for decades. Denny Blaine Park is based on shared values of dignity and respect, and welcomes all parkgoers.*

At Denny Blaine Park, you're invited to:

- *Sunbathe nude*
- *Make new friends*
- *Go on a first date*
- *Kiss on a good date*
- *Be yourself*
- *And more!*

***Thank you for visiting, caring for, and contributing to Denny Blaine Park.***

# Queer Ecology Path

*Welcome to the Queer Ecology Path! Queer ecology recognizes and honors the gender and sexual fluidity present in human and more-than-human worlds. This path aims to celebrate the queer nature of Denny Blaine Park by engaging with queer plants, or plants that hold significance to the 2SLGBTQIA+ community.*

Why does Queer Ecology matter?

*By recognizing queerness in the more-than-human world, we're able to understand how gender and sexual fluidity are entirely natural, beautiful, and have been ever-present. Learning about queer ecologies can make us feel connected and represented within more-than-human beings and ways of life.*

Where can I find Queer Ecology near me?

*Queer ecologies are all around you! Informational plant cards can be found along the path, and will teach you how to identify these plants. Soon you'll begin to notice how far these plants extend into the rest of Seattle and beyond.*

Can I add plants to the Queer Ecology Walk?

*Yes! If you know of a queer plant, or a plant that is significant to you, please add it to the path and feel free to stop by on community gardening days. We want to build human and more-than-human community!*

***Thank you for visiting, caring for, and contributing to Denny Blaine Park.***

# Nude-Friendly Beach

*Nudity is legal in Seattle. At Denny Blaine Park, like any other beach, you are within your rights to be nude. Be respectful of other parkgoers who are at the beach. Enjoy the sun!*

***Thank you for visiting, caring for, and contributing to Denny Blaine Park.***

***Yarrow***
*Achillea millefollium*



*"An asexual, tall, slender stalk with radiating fern-like leaves crowned with an array of small white flowers, yarrow is an ancient staple of traditional medicine and folklore prized for its magical properties. Yarrow remains sacred to midsummer and beloved as a medicinal plant."*
(Source: Alice Austen House, n.d.-c)

**Figure 6.20:** Affirmational Signage at DB Park. Breaking Barriers to Belonging through reimagined affirmational signage at DB Park.

"Welcome!" signage inspired by jah elyse sayers. Source: Alfonseca et al. 2024
"Queer Ecology Path" signage inspired by the "Queer Ecologies Project." Source: Alice Austen House Museum, n.d.-b
"Nude-Friendly Beach" sources: Boiko-Weyrauch 2018; Public Affairs 2008

surpass barriers in the park. Walls could be deliberately crumbling, revealing ways they can be broken. Last, walls could be converted into seating elements, creating spaces for unity and gathering rather than division. Transforming these stones from retaining walls that inhibited accessibility into elements that foster agency, connection, inclusion, and safety are central to belonging as defined in Chapter 2. Inspiration for material reuse arose from the precedent Dolly's Park, where bricks and wood timbers from demolition sites were similarly repurposed to meet users' needs.

## Reimagined Abatement Fence

I believe the abatement fence could be transformed in various ways at DB Park to support queer belonging. Through collaboration with artists, the fence could be sculpted into an art piece that beautifies the space, and possibly include cultural associations through colored glass, plastics, or fabrics (Progress Pride Flag coloration; Pink Triangles; etc.). The fence could become a participatory installation, where community members weave fabrics, letters, plants, or found materials to create an interactive tapestry. Last, the fence could include welcoming or educational signage about DB Park to invite parkgoers into the space. Jacob Riis Park provides a precedent, since parkgoers in New York also interwove decorative elements into the park's adjacent barbed wire and chain link fencing. That act demonstrated the parkgoers' agency to transform materials. The decoration and beautification of materials traditionally considered hostile is an act of queer resistance and joy. As a sense of agency is a core component of belonging as defined in Chapter 2, having the power to claim and transform the abatement fences at DB Park is supportive of queer belonging. Additionally, removing a fence that felt stigmatizing to parkgoers will support their sense of inclusion, another component of belonging.

## Affirmational Signage

As demonstrated through the survey and interviews, the majority of respondents wanted signage that recognizes DB Park as clothing-optional, indicates its queer usage

and history, and has a code of conduct encouraging respect. However, some respondents had compelling concerns about each type of signage, as shown in **Figure 5.41**. These concerns included erosion of Seattle's nudity laws, worries that "queer" does not encompass all non-cis/het identities, and arguments against criminalization of queer people through a code of conduct. In order to meet respondent's interests while also addressing their concerns, I created the following signage proposals shown in **Figure 6.20**.

In the "Welcome!" signage, I included 2SLGBTQIA+ history of the park, using the full acronym rather than "queer" in hopes to practice more inclusive language. I also followed inspiration from jah elyse sayers at Jacob Riis Park, listing activities parkgoers are invited to do rather than prohibited from doing. Using Hanlan's Point Beach as precedent, I included dignity and respect as shared values to act as a positive "code of conduct" at DB Park. Together, I aimed for the "Welcome!" signage to be informative, inclusive, positive/affirmational, and open-ended.

In the "Nude-Friendly Beach" signage, I aimed to inform parkgoers of their lawful right to nudity at DB Park, as well as other beaches in Seattle. I believe this will help prepare newcomers for DB Park's culture of nudity, protect nude parkgoers from unlawful restrictions on their nudity, and educate Seattleites on the freedom of nudity present throughout the city. Through welcome and nude-friendly signage, I aimed to support this core tenet of belonging as described in Chapter 2: feeling you can show up as your full self. Parkgoers can come exactly as they are, be clothed or naked, and freely enjoy the space.

In the "Queer Ecology Path" signage, I aimed to create learning opportunities for DB Park visitors. In the DB Park redesigns, I imagined having a queer plant path or planting design incorporated throughout, so parkgoers could be immersed in queer ecology. In these proposed designs and signage, I also encouraged parkgoers to plant their own queer plants at DB Park, contributing to growing human and more-than-human communities.

Last, the "Yarrow" signage exemplifies what an educational queer plant placard could look like at DB Park. I imagine these plant cards could be interspersed throughout the site, providing further opportunities for learning and human- to more-than-human connection. The placard uses text from the precedent "Queer Ecologies Project," a project that similarly aims to educate visitors on the abundance of queer more-than-human beings.

Taken together, the reimagined retaining wall, reimagined fencing, and affirmational and educational signage all support the overarching concept of "Breaking Barriers to Belonging." These design elements, along with the project program, will be incorporated into DB Park's final designs.

## QUEER DESIGNS FOR DB PARK

Having explored and established the project's principles, program, and concept, I proceeded to develop reimagined designs for DB Park. For this thesis, I created three design proposals for DB Park based upon the principles, program, and concept discussed above. As shown in **Figure 6.21**, each proposal incorporates all five programmatic elements - gathering, solitude, learning, participation, essential needs - but emphasizes different qualities. Each proposal also includes the design concept's elements - reimagined retaining walls, fencing, affirmational and educational signage - but with slight modifications per design. First, commonalities between each of the three proposals is described. Then, each of the three proposals are fully explored.

### Commonalities Between Proposals

#### CONNECTION ACROSS THE SITE

In each proposal, I connected DB Park's upper loop to the upper tier by removing asphalt and parking spaces. I felt this depaving activated the upper loop, unified the park, and created greater opportunities for programming. In each proposal, parking has been moved to the northern end of E. Denny Blaine Pl. Access to the adjacent properties' driveways was maintained in each proposal.

#### ADA ACCESSIBLE RAMP AND MAT AT BEACH

Each DB Park redesign has an ADA accessible ramp leading from ADA parking spaces to DB's lower tier. At the beach, a proposed wheelchair accessible mat ensures parkgoers with mobility aids can leisure on the sand.

#### CROSSWALK ACROSS E LK WASH. BLVD

Each proposal has a new crosswalk across E. Lake Washington Blvd. connecting pedestrians to a new entry at the western end of the upper loop.

#### PROTECTIVE PLANTING BUFFER

Due to the perceptions of surveillance and perceived threats posed by neighbor's cameras, each proposal for DB Park's redesign has either trees (greater than 15') or tall shrubs (4' - 10' tall) acting as a visual barrier along the perimeters of the park. Areas of lower plantings (less than 3') were interspersed throughout to support feelings of visibility and safety.

#### PRESERVING MATURE TREES

In order to honor the multiplicity of beings on site, and respect services provided by mature trees through carbon sequestration and shade, I worked to maintain as many existing trees as possible on site. However, in proposals 2 and 3, the northern Pussy Willow trees (Salix discolor) are removed. In proposal 3, one American Linden tree (Tilia americana) is also removed to create space for a proposed shuttle stop.

#### PLANT PALETTE

Each proposal utilizes the same broad plant palette: lawn, meadow, queer/native perennials and shrubs (less than 3'), and queer/native shrubs (4' - 10'). Primary considerations for plantings were creating spaces for sunbathing on the lawn, enhancing opportunities for seasonality and biodiversity through the meadow, and increasing opportunities for learning and privacy/visibility with shrubs. Planting recommendations do not include specific species; instead the recommendations include information such as height or seasonal interest as they focus on the spatial and experiential effects.

#### GATHERING AND SOLITUDE ON LAKE WASH.

Many survey and interview respondents indicated they enjoy sunbathing, swimming, spending time with others, and spending time alone at DB Park, as shown previously in **Figure 5.37**. I therefore tried to maintain existing spaces for gathering and solitude close to Lake Washington, since these areas seemed to function well for parkgoers' needs and interests.

#### ADA PARKING, RESTROOMS, SHOWERS, AND DRINKING FOUNTAINS

As described throughout this thesis, accessibility, restrooms, and other essential needs were important to DB Park survey/interview respondents. I therefore included 1-2 ADA parking spaces in each proposal, as well as 1-4 ADA single-occupancy restrooms and 1-2 non-ADA size restrooms. Each design also has room for outdoor showers and drinking fountains.

### Divergence Between Proposals

The commonalities regarding connection, circulation, accessibility, planting, and programming were incorporated into all three proposed redesigns for DB Park. Beyond these similarities, the three proposals diverged to enhance particular programmatic elements.

I chose to create three proposals in alignment with the queer concept of multiplicity. There is no one "right" way to be; rather, there are multiple futures possible for DB Park that can support queerness and queer belonging (Escobar 2017, xvi, 15). By proposing three redesigns of DB Park, I offer readers and community members different possibilities for the space. These proposals are intended to be a helpful reference, inspiration, or starting point for parkgoers, stewards, and advocates to dream of more expansive queer futures for DB Park.

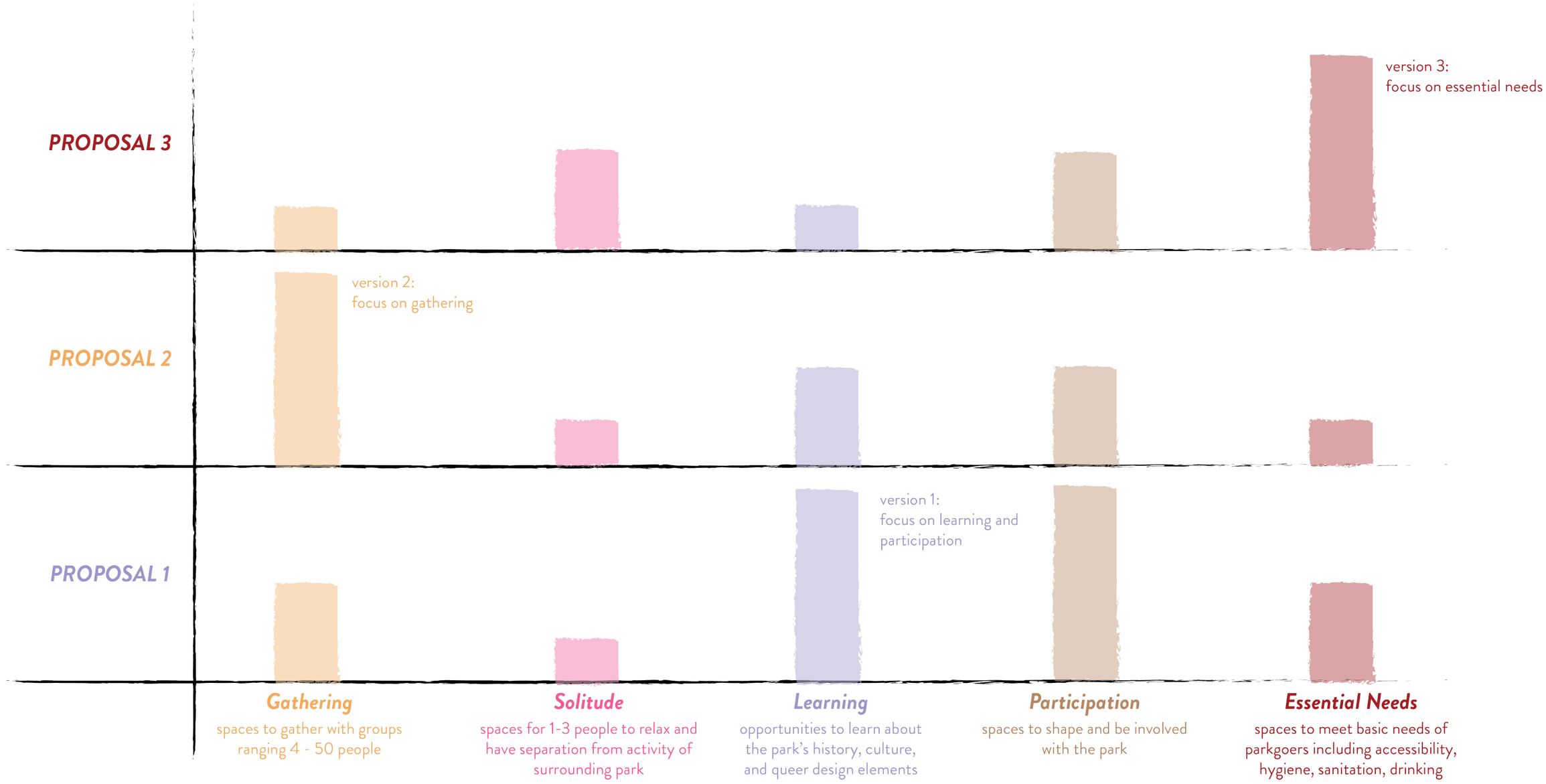



**Figure 6.21:** Design Proposals for DB Park. Three reimagined proposals of DB Park enhance different Programmatic elements.

# *Design Proposal 1: Learning and Participation*



## Proposal 1: Learning and Participation




**Figure 6.22:** Proposal 1 Concept Plan. Design elements aim to enhance learning and participation at DB Park. Arriving at the park's western entry, parkgoers pass under a colorful, readapted chain link canopy nestled in a bright and sunny meadow. Moving through a reused retaining wall, they enter the Queer Plant Path with signage about park history, its queer and nude-friendly culture, and about the diverse array of queer plants incorporated into the landscape. An Art Amphitheater sits within a grove of mature Linden trees, offering parkgoers the opportunity to participate through the weaving of fabrics or found materials into reclaimed abatement fence panels to beautify and uniquely adapt the space. Finally, parkgoers enter the eastern portion of the park, and can choose to take stairs or an ADA-accessible path down to the beach for sunbathing and relaxation.

# PROPOSAL 1:
# LEARNING AND PARTICIPATION

Design Proposal 1 is focused on enhancing programmatic elements of learning and participation at DB Park. Programmatic areas for the Learning and Participation Design are shown in **Figure 6.23**.

Opportunities for learning and participation are infused in the park's reimagined upper loop through a Queer Plant Path and Art Amphitheater. The Queer Plant Path includes a central path with informational sign cards describing the history of DB Park and education on queer ecology. The plant path can be seen in **Figure 6.26**, and examples of signage are shown in **Figure 6.20**. An alternative, informal path offers opportunity for independent exploration, discovery, and learning. Signage invites parkgoers to add their own queer plants to the park, contributing to a larger human and more-than-human community. At the Art Amphitheater, parkgoers are invited to weave art or found materials into repurposed abatement fence panels. These panels create an interactive tapestry, where parkgoers have the agency to transform these previously divisive panels into beautiful site elements. A vignette of the Art Amphitheater can be seen in **Figure 6.27**.

In this design, the abatement fence has been transformed into informational signage along the Queer Plant Path, and shade canopies over the entry and seating areas. Half the former retaining wall was removed and repurposed throughout other areas of the site for structural or seating elements. The design is accessible from the ADA parking spots up to the Art Amphitheater and down to the Wheelchair Beach Mat, as shown in **Figure 6.24**. Several seating areas lie along the ADA path, offering different experiences on upper, middle, and lower levels of the park. Two ADA restrooms and a non-ADA restroom are available, along with showers to clean off after a swim.

Parkgoers arriving at the Learning and Participation Design begin their journey by crossing E Lake Washington Blvd on a new crosswalk, feeling protected from and visible to oncoming traffic. Parkgoers enter the site through a colorful, repurposed chain link fence canopy, where sunlight streaming through the canopy's tiles create colorful shadows in the pavement. A mix of native pollinator-friendly plants brightens and welcomes them into the space. Moving along the Queer Plant Path, parkgoers stop to read placards with information about the surrounding ecology, learning about more-than-human queerness infused throughout the landscape. They next arrive at the Art Amphitheater, where some weave flowers or fabrics from home into reclaimed fence panels. Leaving the Art Amphitheater, parkgoers arrive at DB Park's second entry, located next to an ADA parking spot. A ramp leads into the park, where there are options to gather on the lawn, find nooks for solitude, or relax on the beach. Taking either stairs or an accessible ramp, parkgoers arrive at the beach, and can gather with friends at the northern end or find quieter space for solitude at the southern edge.

**Figures 6.25-6.27** offer glimpses into what this reimagination of DB Park focused on Learning and Participation may look like.



## Proposal 1: Programmatic Diagram




**Figure 6.23:** Proposal 1 Programmatic Diagram. Learning and participation are enhanced at the Queer Plant Path and Art Amphitheater.

## Proposal 1: Accessibility Diagram




**Figure 6.24:** Proposal 1 Accessibility Diagram. The park is accessible from the Art Amphitheater to the beach.

## Proposal 1: Beach Looking Southwest



**Figure 6.25:** Proposal 1, Beach Looking Southwest. Parkgoers enjoy an afternoon at the beach. Beginning at the top of the park, community members have room to set up tents and tables for organizing or artistic activities. An ADA-accessible restroom and public showers are available for parkgoers to use and clean off after a swim. Meandering down an accessible path, parkgoers can sit on a bench overlooking the water, providing varied options for those who prefer an elevated seat rather than lying on the ground. Parkgoers can choose to take stairs to the southern end of the beach to relax in solitude, or continue to the north end of the beach for a more communal gathering experience. A fire lit in the fire pit offers warmth and the chance to roast some food in the setting sun.

## Proposal 1: Upper Loop Looking East



**Figure 6.26:** Proposal 1, Upper Loop Looking East. Parkgoers can enter the site along a crosswalk at E Lake Washington Blvd. A reused chain link canopy with colorful panels shines light onto the pavement and parkgoers, illuminating and inviting users into the landscape. A meadow mix brightens the entry, where users can choose to sit and rest or continue down the Queer Plant Path. Informational panels (shown here in orange) are made of reclaimed abatement fence material. Rather than dividing the site as they previously did, they now embrace queer and nudist belonging by providing a history of DB Park, its queer and nudist culture, and information about local queer ecology. Parkgoers can wander an adjacent trail to be more fully immersed in the lush plants around them. Taller shrubs and trees act as a buffer between the upper loop and surrounding streets and neighborhood.

**Figure 6.27:** Proposal 1, Art Amphitheater. The Art Amphitheater invites users to collaborate in the weaving of reused abatement fence panels (shown in orange). Parkgoers can contribute a variety of materials, such as fabrics, plants, branches, shells, feathers, or more, to create a multitude of collaborative tapestries. Others can simply relax in the space, reclining on the amphitheater hillside and gazing at the sky through a reclaimed fence canopy. The bottom portion of the Art Amphitheater is ADA accessible, so parkgoers of all ability levels to enjoy and participate in the space. Stairs lead up to the Queer Plant Path, while the lower ramp extends down to the beach.

# *Design Proposal 2: Gathering*



## Proposal 2: Gathering




**Figure 6.28:** Proposal 2 Concept Plan. Design elements aim to enhance gathering at DB Park. Arriving at the park's western entry, parkgoers enter a small retaining wall gathering area. Two lampposts, reused from those previously in the parking lot, stand at the entry leading into the park. Walking down the path, radiating 1'-2' tall retaining walls offer an array of options for seating alone or in small groups, while also having continuous lawn space for larger events. Parkgoers can choose to sit or sunbathe in sun or shade, resting in areas tucked against taller shrubs or more central lawn spaces. Reclaimed abatement fence panels provide opportunities for learning or collaborative weaving. They contain informative signage on the park's history, queer and nude-friendly culture and use, and queer ecology. Two ADA-accessible parking spots invite parkgoers to more easily and immediately enter the park's lower entry, with an accessible southern path leading to the beach. A wheelchair mat makes the beach inviting and available for parkgoers of all ability levels to gather comfortably on the beach's northern end.

# PROPOSAL 2: GATHERING

Design Proposal 2 is focused on enhancing the programmatic element of Gathering. Programmatic areas for the Gathering Design are shown in **Figure 6.29**.

Gathering was increased by creating a flowing, open-ended sand/grass lawn from the beach through the upper loop. Rather than having retaining walls, the abatement fence, and parking spots break the park into divided tiers, this proposal establishes a continuous connection from east to west across the landscape. Seating walls radiate upward from the beach, making it feel as though the lakeshore reaches up into the neighborhood. The upper loop, a formerly low-use space, is seamlessly incorporated into lower, middle, and upper tiers to make the entire landscape welcoming and flexible for all of the ways parkgoers enjoy using the space - gathering, solitude, sunbathing, picnics, reading, organized events, and beyond.

In this design, the abatement fence has been transformed into informational signage. The entire retaining wall has been repurposed into other areas of the site for structural or seating elements. New, small retaining walls create opportunities for seating and gathering throughout the park. The design is accessible from the ADA parking spots down to the Wheelchair Beach Mat as shown in **Figure 6.30**. The Gathering Design also has a park restroom with 1 ADA stall and 2 non-ADA stalls, an outdoor shower, and space for drinking fountains.

Parkgoers arriving at the Gathering Design begin by crossing the new E Lake Washington Blvd crosswalk, entering a small gathering and landing pad with informational signage. Two lampposts, reclaimed from the former parking lot, mark the entry to the rest of the park. Moving down a central path, parkgoers are met by an abundance of lawn space. Feeling protected by shrubs and trees from peering eyes and traffic, they comfortably chat with friends on a seating wall before continuing down the path. On the way, they stop at repurposed chain link fences that have informational signage about DB Park's history and queer ecology. Learning that the park has been frequented by queers since the 1970s to 1980s, they feel a sense of connection, comfort, and belonging to continue this legacy of leisure in the present day (Kimseylove 2025, 6; Romano 2015a; Rochester 2002). Cutting across the lawn, they step down a series of 1-2' tall terraces to reach DB Park's beach. Other parkgoers have filled these landings, laying out towels to catch the last rays of sun. Parkgoers have started a fire in the new fire pit, and gather together to enjoy its warmth. A parkgoer walks into the water and goes for a swim, then lays at the beaches' southern end to enjoy some solitude and quiet.

**Figures 6.31-6.32** offer glimpses into what this reimagination of DB Park focused on Gathering may look like.



## Proposal 2: Programmatic Diagram

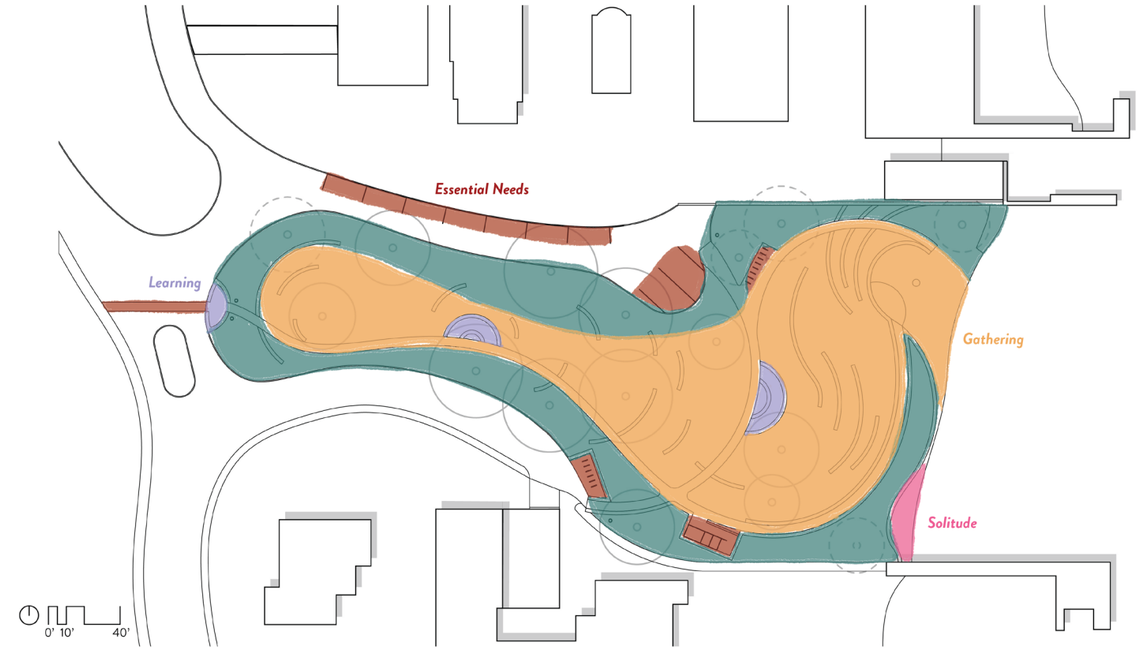



**Figure 6.29:** Proposal 2 Programmatic Diagram. Spaces for gathering extend across the entire east-west span of the park.

## Proposal 2: Accessibility Diagram

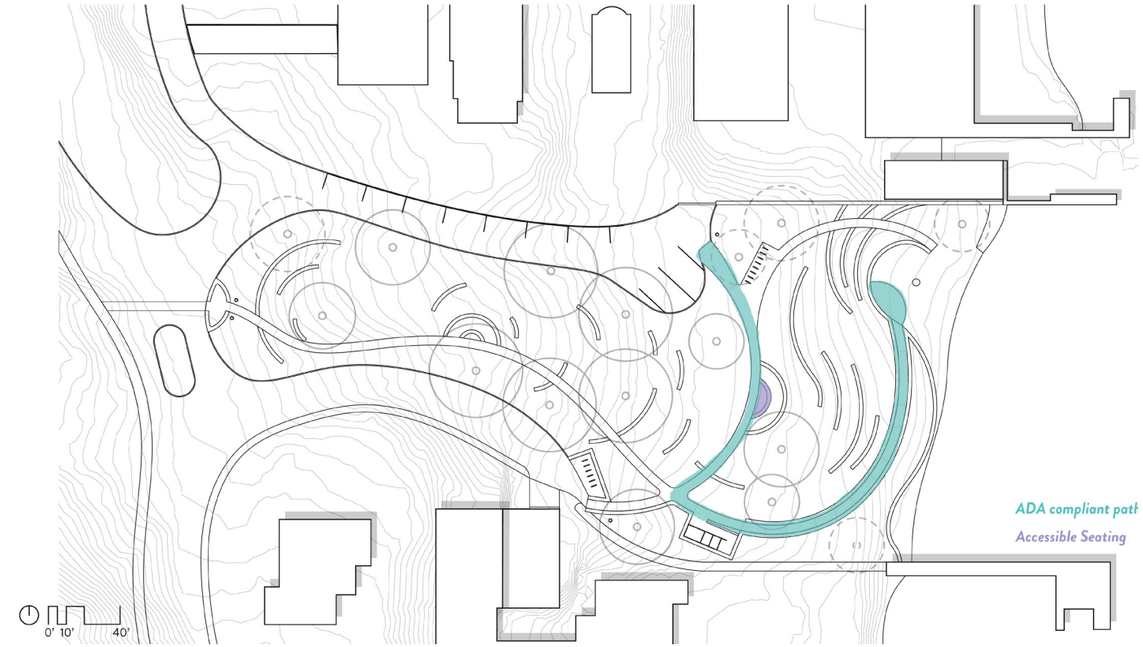



**Figure 6.30:** Proposal 2 Accessibility Diagram. The park is accessible from the lower ADA-accessible parking spaces to the beach.

## Proposal 2: Beach Looking Southwest



**Figure 6.31:** Proposal 2, Beach Looking Southwest. Parkgoers enjoy an afternoon at the beach. Before entering the park, a screen of taller shrubs offers privacy into the park's interior. Some areas of lower perennial and shrubby plantings create openings for visibility, so parkgoers can see how busy the space may be and start planning where they want to lay out a towel. Those arriving by bike can lock their bike at the expanded bike racks that sit at each lower entry. Passing the taller shrub threshold, parkgoers are greeted by expansive views of Lake Washington. A semi-circle of reused fence panels surround reused retaining wall seating, so parkgoers can sit and take their time reading through DB Park's rich history. Cascading tiers of retaining wall seating culminate at the beach. Each wall, spaced at least 7'-8' apart, offers space for parkgoers to lay out and soak up the sun.

## Proposal 2: Upper Loop Looking East

**Figure 6.32:** Proposal 2, Upper Loop Looking East. Parkgoers can enter the site along a crosswalk at E Lake Washington Blvd. An entry area, made of stones reused from DB Park's former retaining wall, is lined with information about DB Park. Nude-friendly signage is included, so people who are new to DB Park learn about the park's usage and shared culture of dignity and respect before entering the space. Trees and tall shrubs embrace the central lawn, so parkgoers feel fully immersed in the space. Reused retaining wall seating rises and falls within the lawn, creating a variety of options for parkgoers to sit alone or with friends. On casual days, parkgoers can rest on towels or seating walls to gather in the park. This reimagined and protected lawn space also offers new opportunities for larger events to span the entirety of DB Park, from the beach to its western entry.

# *Design Proposal 3: Essential Needs*



# Proposal 3: Essential Needs




**Figure 6.33:** Proposal 3 Concept Plan. Design elements aim to enhance essential needs at DB Park. Parkgoers can arrive at a new bus stop proposed on E Lake Washington Blvd, then cross the street into DB Park's western entry. The entire path is ADA accessible, creating a space for users of all ability levels to meander along the site between bright flowering meadow plants and lush queer and native vegetation. Benches on the path are spaced 100'-150' apart, offering opportunities for rest in a variety of environments that suit users' interests or needs. Parkgoers can rest nestled amongst taller shrubs for solitude, beneath tree canopies for shade, within the lawn spaces to gather with larger groups, or near the lake to overlook the water and mountains. Four ADA-accessible restrooms, outdoor showers, and drinking fountains can accommodate user needs during all seasons. At the beach, a wheelchair mat creates accessible space for sunbathing. The southern end of the beach is shaded by newly planted trees and shrubs, offering a quieter space for solitude and tranquil relaxation.

# PROPOSAL 3:
# ESSENTIAL NEEDS

Design Proposal 3 is focused on enhancing the programmatic element of Essential Needs. Programmatic areas for the Essential Needs Design are shown in **Figure 6.34**.

To meet parkgoers' essential needs on-site, I focused on creating an experience where park elements and features were intentionally and beautifully organized to be accessible within the park. The central feature of this design was an ADA accessible path that spans the entire length of the park. Along the path are numerous options for bench seating, located in experientially distinctive portions of the park. Some benches are nestled amongst shorter queer/native shrubbery, creating opportunities for expansive views of the park. Some benches sit in full sun or below the deep shade of evergreen tree canopies, creating versatile options for parkgoers who want to stay warm or cool down. Some benches are directly in the lawn space, so parkgoers who prefer or cannot sit comfortably on the grass can gather with larger groups. Benches span the entire length of the park at roughly 100'-150' intervals, creating opportunities for parkgoers to pause and rest as they move across the landscape. Through an array of accessible seating environments, parkgoers of all ability levels have opportunities for gathering and solitude, and varied sensory experiences.

Other elements within the park that supported essential needs included restrooms, drinking fountains, and public showers. Of all the proposals, this design has the greatest number of public restrooms, providing 4 ADA stalls.

To enhance essential needs, the design also focuses on increasing accessibility to the park. This goal was achieved through new bus and shuttle stops. Additionally, this design includes the greatest number of new bike racks. Together, these transportation proposals aim to increase park access for those without private vehicles.

In this design, the abatement fence has been transformed into informational signage. The entire retaining wall has been repurposed into other areas of the site for structural or seating elements.

Parkgoers arriving at the Essential Needs Design could begin by getting off at the new bus stop on E Lake Washington Blvd. They then take the crosswalk into the western DB Park entry. The western entry, shown in **Figure 6.37**, has informational signage about park history, queer ecology, and nudity at the park. For parkgoers wanting to move along an ADA accessible path, they enjoy a meandering journey through a flowering meadow, queer perennials, and protective shrubs. The path offers a variety of visual and sensory experiences, and several benches. Numerous other parkgoers sit alone or in pairs on these benches throughout the site, reading a book, enjoying the vegetation, or taking in lakeside views. Parkgoers eager to reach the beach cut across the lawn that continues through the middle of the park, shortening their path to Lake Washington. Planting beds create distinct grassy areas for gathering, where tall plants offer privacy from adjacent homes. Parkgoers then pass the site's lower entry, and see other visitors disembark the local shuttle to DB Park adjacent to ADA parking spots. Finally passing the restroom and gradually winding their way down the hillside, parkgoers ultimately reach DB Park's beach. A group is gathered on the sand, while others move to the south end for a solitary beach experience.

**Figures 6.36-6.38** offer glimpses into what this reimagination of DB Park focused on Essential Needs may look like.



## Proposal 3: Programmatic Diagram




**Figure 6.34:** Proposal 3 Programmatic Diagram. Elements to meet essential needs are incorporated through accessible pathways, restrooms, showers, and seating. Access to the park is supported via proposed bus and shuttle stops, ADA parking, and more bike racks.

## Proposal 3: Accessibility Diagram

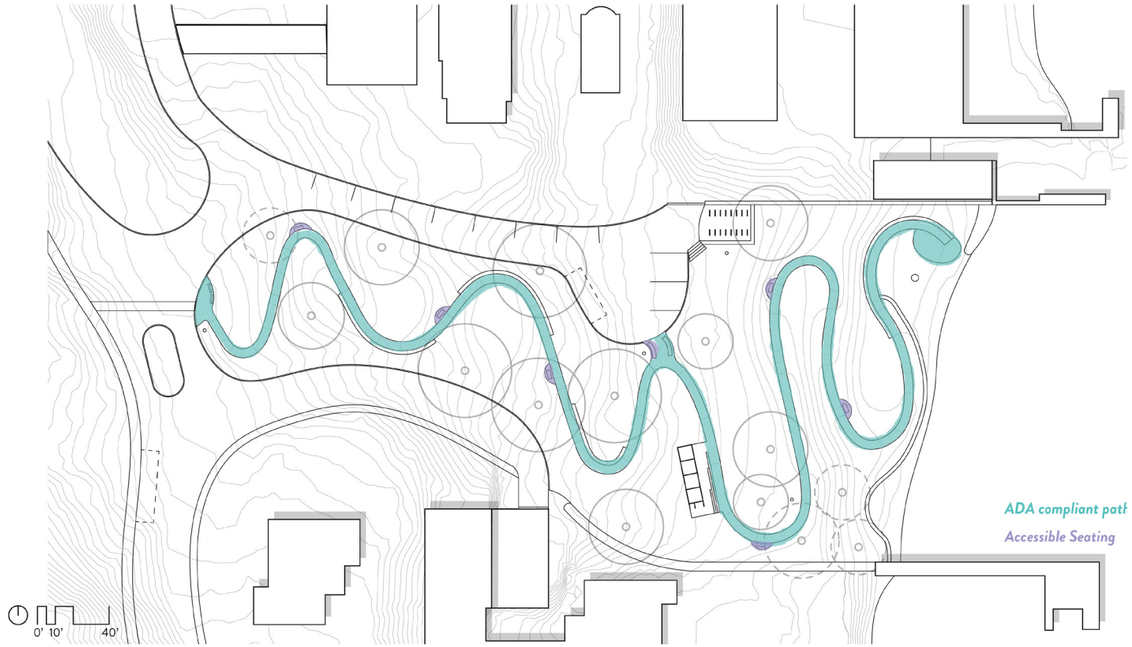



**Figure 6.35:** Proposal 3 Accessibility Diagram. The entirety of the path through the park is ADA-accessible, with seating options spaced at 100'-150' intervals for comfort, and to offer a variety of sensory experiences and environments for enjoyment.

## Proposal 3: Beach Looking Southwest

**Figure 6.36:** Proposal 3, Beach Looking Southwest. Parkgoers enjoy an afternoon at the beach. Trees and tall native shrubs planted at the perimeter of the park offer parkgoers a sense of immersion and seclusion in DB Park. A meandering ADA-accessible path draws parkgoers into the space, with benches offering expansive views of Lake Washington. Taller shrubs next to the beach offer a visual buffer for those who sunbathe on its southern end. Parkgoers can move along the path, or traverse the grassy hillside to find spaces for lounging or access the beach more directly. Expanded bike racks at the site entry can accommodate parkgoers' bikes during the park's busier summer season.

## Proposal 3: Upper Loop Looking East

**Figure 6.37:** Proposal 3, Upper Loop Looking East. Parkgoers can enter the site along a crosswalk at E Lake Washington Blvd. Entry signage, made from reclaimed abatement fence panels, provides opportunities for learning about DB Park's history, about the park's queer and nudist usage and culture, and about the queer ecological plantings that have been incorporated into the space. An ADA accessible path traverses the site, offering a gentle journey through the lush landscape. Those with mobility aids, beach coolers, strollers, bikes, and beyond can enjoy the gradual descent into DB Park. Lawns are interspersed through the upper loop's vegetation, creating smaller opportunities for gathering or rest before parkgoers arrive at the beach below.

## Proposal 3: Parking Lot Entry




**Figure 6.38:** Proposal 3, Parking Lot Entry. The lower entry sits next to ADA-accessible parking spots, and adjacent to the proposed DB Park shuttle stop. Parkgoers can easily move out of their vehicles, and choose to go down toward the beach or into the park's upper loop. The entry is lit by a reused lamppost, moved from its former spot along the park's old retaining wall. A bench sits across from reclaimed abatement fence panel signage. The sign offers an opportunity for learning about the park's history, queer and nudist use and culture, and about the queer ecological plants incorporated into the landscape. This fence panel could also act as a community bulletin board, so parkgoers could learn about upcoming events happening in or beyond DB Park, or learn how to get involved in stewarding the landscape.

# Inconclusions, Celebrations, Limitations, and Hopes for Queer Futures

07

*"A civilization based on the love of life is a far better option than one based on its destruction" - Arturo Escobar, Designs for the Pluriverse, 2017, 14*

*"Are we brave enough to imagine beyond the boundaries of 'the real' and then do the hard work of sculpting reality from our dreams?" - adrienne maree brown, Octavia's Brood, 2015, 5*



## INCONCLUSIONS

Taking inspiration from Jake Minden's thesis, I too am ending this paper with inconclusions. As Minden writes, "concluding queerly requires inconclusions. Inconclusions understand ending as multiple narratives and reorient the singular ending as plural beginnings" (Minden 2021, 136). Through the three design proposals to reimagine DB Park, I hoped to propose visions of multiple futures from which many more possibilities can emerge. Perhaps one proposal resounds most strongly to you, or portions of all three designs do. Or perhaps they inspire you to imagine more radical, beautiful, transformative, and healing spaces. There is no singular "solution" for what DB Park should be. Instead, this thesis strove to envision multiple worlds where queerness and queers could find space for connection, safety, inclusion, celebration, agency, and visibility. For decades, DB Park has been a unique and cherished space for queer parkgoers. Through these proposals founded on a sample of community wants, needs, and desires, I hoped to build upon the park's legacy to create a space even more conducive to queer belonging.

## CELEBRATIONS

In reimagining DB Park to support queerness and queer belonging, I first had to resolve two underlying research questions of this thesis: how can design itself be done queerly, and what do queer community members want or need in the park? In answering these questions, I offered and practiced several methods of queer design. After exploring literature and studying the precedents of Queered, Queerly, and Queering Design projects, I proposed universal design, material reuse, queer planting design, and affirmational signage as four ways that design can be done queerly. I argue why these methods are queer in Chapter 2's "Why does Queering Design Matter?" and Chapter 3's "Takeaways: Methods of Queer Design". Namely, they are queer because they uphold queer values of multiplicity and collectivism defined in Chapter 1.

In Chapter 2's "Why does Queering Design Matter?" I also propose community-driven design as a vital method of queer design due to its root in multiplicity. While conventional design can be top-down and ignore diverse community needs and interests, community-driven design recognizes and acts upon the multiplicity of

community expertise. These solutions are grounded in actual wants, needs, and desires of those who are most impacted by designs through collaborative ideation amongst designers and community members. Through community-driven design, more innovative and relevant solutions can be ideated and explored. I implemented the queer method of community-driven design in Chapter 5 through site reading, a survey, and interviews with self-identified queer parkgoers.

In site reading, I believe weaving experiential frames lent me a deeper connection to DB Park than would have been possible through conventional site analysis alone. I created a more personal connection with the landscape and greater appreciation for its multiplicity of human/more-than-human users. These connections contributed to design takeaways that were implemented in the DB Park's reimagined proposals. Importantly, I was able to listen and learn from queer community members themselves through a survey and interviews. The insights shared by participants during this process directly led to the principles and program for DB Park's redesigns, supplemented by takeaways from site reading and precedent studies. By having queer participants' wants, needs, and experiences lay the foundation for the reimagined DB Park proposals, I aimed to practice community-driven design. In total, I explored a queering of landscape design practices through universal design, material reuse, queer planting design, affirmational signage, and community engagement involving site reading, a survey, and interviews. I believe these methods upheld queer values of collectivism, multiplicity, subversion of OWW norms and powers, and a futuring of more just worlds.

Reflecting upon this thesis, I arrived at one final (in) conclusion regarding queer design. I believe that **queer design is an ethic, not an aesthetic**. Like queer humans and more-than-humans, and in alignment with multiplicity, there is no singular "right way" to "look queer." Therefore, I don't believe landscapes have to be physically or aesthetically designed in a particular way to "be queer." Rather, landscape design is queer if it upholds queer values. To give examples of ways that a "queer aesthetic" could actually be in alignment with OWW values rather than queer values, consider the usage of Progress Pride Flags or painted crosswalks. Imagine a corporation that pulled DEI funding, aided the tracking and targeting of disproportionately BIPOC civilians and neighbors, undervalued employees with marginalized identities, or conducted other activities in furtherance of OWW values. If the company had a corporate campus with Progress Pride Flags to show their "support" for queers, that flag would not make that landscape or design queer. That landscape is entrenched in destructive values that directly contradict the freedom and equality represented by its flag. Likewise, if DB Park were to get a rainbow crosswalk while the abatement fence still restricted free expression and numerous cameras still recorded queer bodies, the crosswalk would not make DB Park's design queer. In both examples, these landscapes' "queer" aesthetic fails to uphold actual queer ethics. That is why, in the course of this thesis, I repeatedly returned to the core tenets of queerness and belonging in each phase of design. Rather than focusing on the park having a queer "look," I wanted it to value and practice queerness. Of course I also strove to make it a carefully considered and beautiful space for parkgoers to enjoy, but values were the undercurrent for all aesthetic considerations. By basing the design on the queer methods identified above, I strove to imagine queer futures for DB Park rooted in queer ethics.

## LIMITATIONS

Despite its aspirations, this thesis had limitations. First, as discussed, the demographics of participants involved in the engagement process were limited in terms of race, age, and likely housing status. All but one respondent self-identified as White, no parkgoers under 18 years old were included to avoid IRB restrictions, and many were 25-34 years old. While I did not ask participants about housing status, many listed they had incomes that suggest financial access to a home. Many parkgoers reported DB Park as being a racially diverse space, however, racial diversity is not reflected in the community engagement. Additionally, several respondents mentioned how DB Park is enjoyed by houseless parkgoers, a demographic likely underrepresented in this thesis. The absence of BIPOC and houseless park users is significant, as surveillance and enforcement are prevalent in DB Park and disproportionately impact BIPOC and houseless communities. I feel strongly that parkgoers with these identities must be centered in creating solutions to these threats. The underrepresentation of queer BIPOC, houseless, and youth parkgoers also omits ways in which queer youth, particularly BIPOC queer youth, disproportionately experience homelessness ("LGBTQ+ Youth Homelessness" 2026). Research has found LGBTQ+ youth to be "over 120% more likely to experience homelessness than their non-LGBTQ+ peers" ("LGBTQ+ Youth Homelessness" 2026, para. 4). BIPOC queer youth "have an 83% higher risk of experiencing homelessness compared with their non-BIPOC peers" ("LGBTQ+ Youth Homelessness" 2026, para. 7). Considering ways in which systemic injustices resulting from white supremacy, racism, colonization, queer- and transphobia created and perpetuate these inequalities, the importance of DB Park for safety and belonging of those most marginalized in the queer community is starkly apparent. As a space shaped, protected, and enjoyed by queer, BIPOC, houseless, and/or youth parkgoers, DB Park's future must be driven by insights and expertise from these communities. To apply language popularized by disability rights activists of the 1980s and 1990s, "nothing about us without us" (Costanza-Chock 2020, 93; Charlton 1998, 3). Since this thesis overrepresents experiences of White parkgoers in the space, it is currently "without" BIPOC, youth, and houseless parkgoers and communities. Queer belonging cannot be achieved without including all of us in the queer community across race, age, ability level, socioeconomic status, housing status, and beyond. As I hope is shown in this thesis, design and queer futuring across intersectional identities results in spaces that are more innovative, beautiful, welcoming, celebratory, safe, and supportive of queerness and queer belonging. The incorporation of the missing demographics will only allow design proposals for DB Park to be more so. The insights shared by survey and interview respondents who participated in this study are invaluable and necessary perspectives. However, future efforts at community-driven design in DB Park requires engagement with the entirety of DB parkgoers, beyond a subset of those with more privileged White identities.

The limited diversity present in survey/interview respondents was likely due to limits in my sampling methods. To connect with queer participants, I primarily outreached to my immediate network in Seattle. I posted flyers at businesses I was familiar with as queer spaces, gave flyers to folks I know for distribution at queer social venues or social media, or outreached to FoDB and QTL. Due to the overrepresentation of White participants, much more thorough outreach networks and modes of reciprocity were likely required to connect with BIPOC or houseless parkgoers. Should this project continue after the publishing of this thesis, I will invite a broader network of collaborators, and offer greater mutual benefits to engagement through avenues such as compensation.

Second, I hoped I would have had much more time for long-term collaboration with queer community members. While I am grateful to have had the opportunity to learn from parkgoers through the survey and interviews, I believe a truly community-driven project would have had repeated meetings and design iterations to generate ideas more wholly reflective of community wishes. The design proposals in this thesis are a first step, and I believe many more rounds of community collaboration are required.

Third, while accessibility was one of the three guiding principles of this project, I did not design for a full breadth of access within DB Park. I primarily focused on reimagining DB Park to have improved physical access (ramps, large restrooms, accessible parking, wheelchair beach mats). However, I did not fully realize ways the park could be more accessible to those with non-visible disabilities, or those disabilities that are "not immediately obvious" such as sensory differences or certain mental health conditions (Living with Non-Visible Disabilities 2020). Considering ways access for non-visibly disabled parkgoers can be designed in DB Park is vital for queer belonging. Possible avenues of future design could include considerations of sensory or therapeutic design elements. As with all forms of universal design, the creation of spaces that are accessible for people with disabilities will make DB Park more enjoyable, user-friendly, safe, and welcoming for parkgoers of all identities.

Last, while I took steps toward a queering of landscape design, I believe the design proposals have opportunities to more fully achieve this aspiration. As author and activist adrienne maree brown asks, "are we brave enough to imagine beyond the boundaries of 'the real' and then do the hard work of sculpting reality from our dreams?" (brown 2015, 5). As currently stands, "the real" at DB Park includes a divisive abatement fence, inaccessible staircases, and restrictive signage. To "imagine beyond" these boundaries, I proposed transforming each of these fences, walls, and signage to support queer belonging. These changes offered

localized improvements - nudity permitted through all portions of the park, equal accessibility across the site, and reduced stigmatization from barriers, to name a few. But I believe further is required to truly sculpt a queer future and reality. Although the fences, walls, and restrictions may be lifted, I have not adequately challenged the conditions that created them. Cameras still attempt to record parkgoers. Security guards still patrol the site and surveil queer bodies. Neighbors are still suing the city to close DB Park. I do believe transforming the fences, walls, and signs is a beginning toward more just queer futures. These proposals start dismantling the "us versus them", "cishet versus queer", "clothed versus naked", "acceptable versus unacceptable" binaries that persist in the park. Still, more is needed. I have not yet conceptualized how DB Park may be reimagined to dismantle the OWW powers that seek to confine it. However, as José Muñoz writes in his book on queer futurity, queerness is "the thing-that-is-not-yet-imagined" (Muñoz 2009, 21). My hope is that this thesis may act as one of many references available for queer advocates to continue creating what has not yet been imagined for DB Park.

## HOPES FOR QUEER FUTURES

From all that I have learned from my research and conversations with parkgoers, one of my greatest lessons is how deeply beloved and significant DB Park is to queer and nudist communities. In so many ways, this tiny 2-acre space feels much bigger than itself, and emblematic of many crises that queer communities face in the world today. Queer people, particularly those who are BIPOC or TGNB, are under attack in this country. The importance of having spaces where queer people feel safe, seen, celebrated, and connected to ourselves, our communities, and the world around us cannot be understated. DB Park is one of those spaces. As said by Rachel, a parkgoer advocating against the children's playground proposal for DB Park funded by Stuart Sloan, "we don't just need bread, we need roses, and Denny Blaine is our roses" ("Friends of Denny-Blaine Park" 2023, 1:20:32).

In its totality, I believe queerness, queer design, and queer futures require us to realize that "a civilization based on the love of life is a far better option than one based on its destruction" (Escobar 2017, 14). Queerness is multiplicity, and loving all beings and ways of being. Queerness is collective, and realizing loving and caring for others is mutually beneficial since we are all deeply interconnected. To realize these visions, we must break barriers to belonging, beginning with fences, walls, and restrictions at DB Park. We must continue dreaming of more queer, just, and loving futures. We must strive to create those realities in DB Park and beyond.






**Figure 7.1:** Keep it Queer. A collage compiled from newspaper clippings and site photographs at DB Park. Newspaper sources: King, 1985; *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* 1904b.

# Appendix



**Appendix A:** Survey and Interview Questions

**Appendix B:** Survey and Interview Flyer

**Appendix C:** Survey and Interview Code Book

# APPENDIX A: SURVEY AND INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

## SURVEY AND INTERVIEW

***Introduction***

This survey should take 10-15 minutes to complete. Thank you for your time and consideration!

The survey is intended for adults (age 18+) who identify within the 2SLGBTQIA+ community, and who either previously or currently spend time at Denny Blaine Park, or have interest in spending time at Denny Blaine Park in the future.

Who's organizing this study and why?

My name is Madison Tenney, and I am a third-year graduate student in the University of Washington's Landscape Architecture department. I identify as a lesbian/queer cisgender White woman. I am currently working on a thesis research project about queer belonging and Denny Blaine Park.

What is this study about?

The goal of my project is to explore how historically queer recreation spaces like Denny Blaine Park can be preserved and reimagined to support queerness and queer belonging in space. At the conclusion of my thesis, I plan on visualizing design ideas for ways Denny Blaine Park could be preserved, maintained, or changed to support queer belonging.

What's the purpose of this survey?

The goal of this survey is to learn what community members enjoy about Denny Blaine Park and wish to see in the park's future. I plan on applying the insight you and others share from survey results to guide design initiatives for my thesis.

What will I be asked about?

The survey will ask you about your demographics, connection to Seattle and Denny Blaine Park, future plans for the park, existing goals and initiatives for the park, and your interest in follow-up.

Is this voluntary, optional, and anonymous/confidential?

Yes! This survey is voluntary and confidential, and all questions are optional. Please only answer questions to which you feel comfortable sharing information.

Who can I contact for follow-up?

If you have questions about the survey or would like to participate in an interview that explores further topics of queer belonging at Denny Blaine Park, please feel free to reach out at: dennyblainethesis@gmail.com



If you want to talk with someone else who is not part of the study team about the thesis, your rights as a research participant, or to report problems or complaints about the study, contact the UW Human Subjects Division at hsdinfo@uw.edu or 206-543-0098

Thank you for your time and participation!

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*Recording Verification*

1. Do I have your permission to record this interview on my phone?
    a. Yes
    b. No

*Age Verification*

1. Are you 18+ years old?
    a. Yes
    b. No → takes to end of survey

*Demographics Questions*

To more fully describe community member's perspectives that will inform this project, I'm hoping to include some background information for participants. These next questions will ask about how you identify.

1. What is your gender identity? (open response)
2. What is your sexual orientation? (open response)
3. How old are you? (check one of the following)
    a. 18-24 years old
    b. 25-34 years old
    c. 35-44 years old
    d. 44-54 years old
    e. 55-64 years old
    f. 65-74 years old
    g. 75-84 years old
    h. 85+ years old
4. What is your race/ethnicity? (open response)
5. What is your total annual income?
    a. Less than $30,000
    b. $30,000 - $60,000
    c. $60,000 - $90,000
    d. $90,000 - $120,000
    e. Greater than $120,000

6. Do you have any disabilities that shape your experience of or access to outdoor recreation spaces? Recreation spaces include parks, beaches, outdoor trails, swimming pools, etc.
    a. Yes
    b. No
7. If yes, please describe how you experience or access recreation spaces: (open response)

*Connection to Seattle and Denny Blaine Park*

These next few questions will be about your time in Seattle and at Denny Blaine Park.

1. How long have you lived in Seattle? (check one of the following)
    a. 0-1 year
    b. 1-3 years
    c. 3-5 years
    d. 5-10 years
    e. 10+ years
2. Have you ever been to Denny Blaine Park?
    a. YES → "Yes, I have been to Denny Blaine Park"
        i. How old were you when you started going to Denny Blaine Park? (check one of the following)
            1. 0-13 years old
            2. 13-18 years old
            3. 18-24 years old
            4. 25-34 years old
            5. 35-44 years old
            6. 44-54 years old
            7. 55-64 years old
            8. 65-74 years old
            9. 75-84 years old
            10. 85+ years old
        ii. How frequently do you visit Denny Blaine Park? (check one of the following)
            1. Once a week or more
            2. Once a month
            3. Once every three months
            4. Once every six months
            5. Once a year
            6. Every few years
        iii. What time of year do you go to Denny Blaine Park? (check all that apply)
            1. Summer



            2. Fall
            3. Winter
            4. Spring
        iv. What time of day do you go to Denny Blaine Park? (check all that apply)
            1. Morning
            2. Afternoon
            3. Evening
            4. Night
        v. How do you get to Denny Blaine Park? (check all that apply)
            1. Personal motor vehicle
            2. Public transportation
            3. Personal bike
            4. Lime bike/rentable bike
            5. Walking
            6. Other: (fill in the blank)
        vi. What type of transportation is most accessible to you? (select all that apply)
            1. Personal motor vehicle
            2. Public transportation
            3. Personal bike
            4. Lime bike/rentable bike
            5. Walking
            6. Other: (fill in the blank)
        vii. What do you like to do at Denny Blaine Park? These answers, like all questions in this survey, will be kept confidential.
            1. Spend time alone
            2. Spend time with others
            3. Go swimming
            4. Sunbathe nude
            5. Participate in park work parties (for example: cleaning the park, picking up trash, etc.)
            6. Organize events
            7. Attend events
            8. Other: (fill in the blank)
        viii. Do you feel that you are being surveilled at Denny Blaine Park?
            1. Yes
            2. No
            3. I don't know
            4. Other: (fill in the blank)

ix. If yes, why do you feel surveilled at Denny Blaine Park? (open response)
x. If yes, has this prevented you from going to Denny Blaine Park?
    1. Yes
    2. No
    3. Other: (fill in the blank)
xi. In terms of race/ethnicity, age, ability or disability, or other intersectional identities, do you feel that Denny Blaine Park is diverse? Why or why not? (open response)

b. NO → "No, I haven't been to Denny Blaine Park"
    i. What's prevented you from going to Denny Blaine Park? (check all that apply)
        1. I don't live close to the Park
        2. I'm unable to get to the Park
        3. I don't have time to go to the Park
        4. I don't know other people who go to the Park
        5. I don't know much about Denny Blaine Park
        6. I'm worried about surveillance at the Park
        7. I'm worried about police activity at the Park
        8. I'm worried about conflict with neighbors near the Park
        9. Other: (fill in the blank)
    ii. What makes you interested in going to Denny Blaine Park in the future? (check all that apply)
        1. I enjoy spending outside at parks
        2. I enjoy spending time at the beach
        3. I want to enjoy the Denny Blaine Park's beauty
        4. I want a recreation space where I feel comfortable being nude
        5. I want a recreation space where I feel comfortable in my queerness
        6. I want to find community with other queer people who go to Denny Blaine Park
        7. Other: (fill in the blank)
    iii. Have you been to other spaces that feel queer to you?
        1. YES → "Yes, I have been to other queer spaces"
            a. Can you describe a queer space where you have felt a sense of belonging or comfort? (open response)
            b. What about this space made you feel belonging or comfort? (open response)
        2. NO → "No, I haven't been to other queer spaces"



*Looking Toward the Future: (IF INTERVIEWEE HAS BEEN TO DENNY BLAINE PARK)*

These next questions will be asking if there's ways that Denny Blaine Park could be changed to better support queer people's sense of belonging in the future.

1. Do you want any changes to be made to Denny Blaine Park?
    a. Yes
    b. No
    c. I don't know
    d. I don't have a preference
    e. Other: (fill in the blank)
2. In a perfect world, how do you imagine Denny Blaine Park looking and feeling? (open response)
3. In terms of race/ethnicity, age, ability or disability, or other intersectional identities, how can Denny Blaine Park be a better space for people of marginalized identities within the queer community?
4. Do you want Denny Blaine Park to be more connected to other queer spaces in Seattle?
    a. Yes
    b. No
    c. I don't know
    d. I don't have a preference
    e. Other: (fill in the blank)
5. If yes, what or where should Denny Blaine Park be more connected to? (open response)

*Looking Toward the Future: (IF INTERVIEWEE HASN'T BEEN TO DENNY BLAINE PARK, BUT HAS BEEN TO ANOTHER QUEER SPACE)*

These next questions will be asking if there's ways that recreation spaces could be changed to better support queer people's sense of belonging in the future. Recreation spaces include parks, beaches, outdoor trails, swimming pools, etc.

1. In a perfect world, how do you imagine queer recreation spaces looking and feeling? (open response)
2. What would you want to do at a queer recreation space? (open response)
3. In terms of race/ethnicity, age, ability or disability, or other intersectional identities, how can queer recreation spaces be a better space for people of marginalized identities within the queer community?
4. Do you want Denny Blaine Park to be more connected to other queer spaces in Seattle?
    a. Yes
    b. No
    c. I don't know
    d. I don't have a preference

    e. Other: (fill in the blank)
5. If yes, what or where should Denny Blaine Park be more connected to? (open response)

*Existing Proposals*
The following is a non-exhaustive list of proposed changes to Denny Blaine Park. The list attempts to collect a range of ideas from community members, neighbors, and the City of Seattle. Please check which - if any - of these changes you would want to have in Denny Blaine Park. (range includes: "I don't want this", "I feel neutral about this", "I do want this")

(The list is compiled from the sources below. These links are optional resources)
https://www.capitolhillseattle.com/2025/08/in-court-embattled-denny-blaine-park-a-show-of-defiance-nudity-and-puppets/
https://friendsofdennyblaine.org/
https://www.dennyblaineparkforall.org/
https://www.seattle.gov/parks/about-us/projects/denny-blaine-park-long-term-plan
https://spdblotter.seattle.gov/2008/11/14/is-nudity-illegal/

1. Proposed Accessibility Changes:
    a. Improve accessibility to the beach, such as adding handrails to stairs
    b. Add parking spots
    c. Add signage showing where to park in the neighborhood when the Denny Blaine lot is full
2. Proposed Amenities:
    a. Add a permanent bathroom/improve restrooms
    b. Add new seating
    c. Add new trash cans
    d. Improve trash pickup
    e. Add art
    f. Add a bulletin board
3. Proposed Signage:
    a. Add signage that recognizes Denny Blaine Park as clothing-optional
    b. Add signage that indicates LGBTQ+ community uses of Denny Blaine Park
    c. Add signage that recognizes the queer history of the park
    d. Add signage with a code of conduct that describes acceptable behaviors at the park and encourages respect for neighbors
4. Proposed Enforcement Plans
    a. Increase presence of Seattle Park Rangers at Denny Blaine Park
    b. Increase parking enforcement at Denny Blaine Park



    c. Have Denny Blaine Park be nude-friendly throughout the Park (reminder: there is no law against being naked in Seattle)
    d. Have "clothing required" and "clothing optional" zones in Denny Blaine Park (reminder: there is no law against being naked in Seattle)
5. Proposed Landscaping Changes:
    a. Improve landscaping at Denny Blaine Park
    b. Improve the grass on the middle level
    c. Replace invasive thorny blackberry bushes with native plants
6. For any goals or initiatives you feel strongly about wanting or not wanting, please explain why below: (open response)
7. Are there any other ideas you would like to have added to Denny Blaine Park?

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INTERVIEW ONLY
**note: the interview questions below were highly informed by those of Jessica Bonner in her 2024 thesis (Bonner, 38-39)**
*Queer Belonging and Queer Space (IF INTERVIEWEE HAS BEEN TO DENNY BLAINE PARK)*
These last few questions will be about your experiences and sense of belonging in queer spaces.
1. What does belonging mean or feel like to you?
2. What does a "queer space" mean or feel like to you?
3. Why do you think queer spaces matter?
4. How does or doesn't Denny Blaine Park feel like a queer space?
5. Thinking back on your experiences in Denny Blaine Park, could you share some times when you've felt a sense of belonging?
    a. What caused you to feel belonging in these situations?
6. Thinking back on your experiences in Denny Blaine Park, could you share some times when you haven't felt a sense of belonging?
    a. What kept you from feeling belonging in these situations?
7. Is there anything else you feel I should know for this project?

*Queer Belonging and Queer Space (IF INTERVIEWEE HASN'T BEEN TO DENNY BLAINE PARK, BUT HAS BEEN TO ANOTHER QUEER SPACE)*
These last few questions will be about your experiences and sense of belonging in queer spaces.
1. What does belonging mean or feel like to you?
2. What does a "queer space" mean or feel like to you?
3. Why do you think queer spaces matter?
4. How does or doesn't the queer space you mentioned before feel like a queer space?

5. Thinking back on your experiences there, could you share some times when you've felt a sense of belonging?
    a. What caused you to feel belonging in these situations?
6. Thinking back on your experiences there, could you share some times when you haven't felt a sense of belonging?
    a. What kept you from feeling belonging in these situations?
7. Is there anything else you feel I should know for this project?

---

*Participating in Follow-up & Thank you!:*
I'm planning on reaching back out to community members when I've completed a first round of design drawings that reflect the insight you and others share in surveys and interviews. If you're interested, follow the link below to share your first name and contact information for follow-up.

***INSERT LINK HERE***

*Thank you for your time and participation!*



## APPENDIX B: SURVEY AND INTERVIEW FLYER

# KEEP IT QUEER

QUEER BELONGING AT **DENNY BLAINE PARK**

### WHAT IS IT?

- graduate student's Landscape Architecture thesis
- explores how Denny Blaine Park can ***support queerness and queer belonging in space***

### WHY PARTICIPATE?

- responses guide thesis design
- what do ***2SLGBTQIA+ community members picture for Denny Blaine Park's future?***

### QUESTIONS?

- contact Madison Tenney (she/her) at the University of Washington
- ***email: dennyblainethesis@gmail.com***

>10-15 minutes!

**SURVEY**

>45 minutes!

**INTERVIEW**

**WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!**

## APPENDIX C: SURVEY AND INTERVIEW CODE BOOK

| CODE NAME | CODE DESCRIPTION |
|---|---|
| Feeling a sense of agency | Having a "say in the organization, design, construction, or reconstruction" of space (powell & Menendian 2024, 136). Being able to contribute to a space (Wise 2022, 7). |
| Feeling connection | "Being part of something" such as another person, community, group, or institution (Wise 2022, 3; powell & Menendian 2024, 141). |
| Feeling included, valued, embraced, and celebrated | Being invited into a space and recognized for your "identities, needs, and contributions" (Wise 2022, 7; powell & Menendian 2024, 141). |
| Feeling one can show up as their full self | Feeling one can show up and be present in all of their identities (Wise 2022, 7). |
| Feeling safe | Ways in which people don't feel in danger of violence or harassment. |
| Feeling seen | Visibility for one's social group (powell & Menendian 2024, 142). |
| Confronts OWW powers | Ways in which queerness confronts One-World World powers including those of heteronormativity, heterosexism, patriarchy, capitalism, white supremacy (Minden 2021, 19; Escobar 2017 67). |
| Embraces multiple ways of being | Ways in which there is no "One World" or one "right" way to exist; instead, there exist many worlds (Escobar 2017, xvi, 15). |
| Collective and relational | Ways in which different beings are connected to, supportive of, and dependent on each other (Escobar 2017, xvi, 12). |
| Non-normative and subversive | Ways in which queerness as anything at odds with dominant/normalized (Halperin 1995, 62). |
| Accessibility | A quality of space that allows equal enjoyment and utilization for people across identities and abilities. |
| Amenities | Features included in space that lend to user needs or enjoyment. |
| Landscaping | Features that encapsulate the softscape (vegetation and planted areas) of a landscape. |
| Signage | Features that can be used to provide information for readers. |
| Surveillance | Monitoring perceived adherence to or defiance of rules or laws. |
| Enforcement | The regulation of perceived rules/restrictions to space. Enforcement can be conducted by police, park rangers, neighbors, and parkgoers. |
| Diversity | A range of people across various identities including race/ethnicity, age, ability or disability, and beyond. |
| Joy | References of joy that parkgoers make in relation to Denny Blaine Park, belonging, or queerness. |
| Program/Activities | Activities that people do at Denny Blaine Park, uses people have for the park, or programmatic elements of the park. |
| Physical Intimacy and Sex | References to physical intimacy and sex at DB Park. |



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