

Project Description/Narrative

The Village of Watkins Glen and Schuyler County are transforming Clute Park into a year-round destination. The program developed during the Downtown Revitalization Initiative Master Planning effort targeted improvements significantly exceeding the funding secured through four state agency grants, and private and municipal contributions. Through a collaborative process, the project team refined the program to resolve the budget without sacrificing functional and emotive goals.

Based on a holistic and integrated approach to landscape and architectural design, the design strengthens the fabric of the village and community. The design weaves elements between the community fabricated 1923 pavilion and salt extraction wells located in the park. Three new structures are composed around a flexible plaza that integrates a central 12,000 square foot patio supporting an ice-skating rink in the winter, and a 2,000 square foot spray pad in the summer.

The bathhouse, located west of the plaza, provides accessible restrooms, rinse showers, and seasonally programmed office space for lifeguards in the summer and skate rental in the winter. The events center provides space for up to 150 guests, a lake front breakout plaza looped by the park trail system, a community run cafe and generous overhangs for shade and shelter. The structures frame views of Seneca Lake and are programmable in combination throughout the year for festivals, private parties, summer movie nights, and children's summer programs. A mechanical building houses seasonal ice systems, the Zamboni, and splash pad systems while framing the composition and marking an entrance.

Design Goals:

- Position the pavilion and bathhouse as integrated wings that protect and integrate the ice rink and splash pad experience.
- Create an internal events space and cafe with views of the iconic lake while creating nurtured views of activities on the courtyard side of the building.
- Establish a safe building that acts as cover during strong thunderstorms.
- Create an inspiring architectural and landscape design that speaks to the natural geometries and history of the site while functioning as a revenue generating facility for the village.
- Maintain the existing pavilion for future development as part of a composition alongside the new pavilion and landscape elements.



AIA's Framework for Design Excellence

Design for Integration: What is the big idea behind this project and how did sustainability inform the design concept?

Clute Park will be a destination for residents of a walkable community. Amenities will be modern, clean, safe, rewarding and drive park usage throughout all four seasons. Improvements will draw regionally and support winter events and festivals. Wayfinding, street, and trails improvements developed concurrently will link residence, businesses, visitors, Watkins Glen State Park, the waterfront, and regional trail systems to a reinvigorated Clute Park.

Context, history, good bones, and tight budgets drive sustainable design. Formally a landfill at the southern end of Seneca Lake, the land was cleared, and a pavilion built by the community in 1923. Salt domes are mined to this day with steam across the length of the park. Working within the geological, ecological, industrial, and cultural history and context of the park, the project team met community, programming, and environmental goals.

The project elevated the use of a contaminated site and improved storm water management minimizing and mitigating impacts. Working in partnership with industry serves multiple interests within a single property. Composing multi-functional facilities in concert with the 1923 pavilion preserves history and facilitates support of a wide variety of events and programming.

Design for Ecology: In what ways does the design respond to the ecology of its place?

The community emphasized the importance of maintaining the existing natural environment as a minimum baseline for the site. Preserve the canopy provided by mature trees like sycamore and willow that thrive in wet organic soils. Maintain haven for migratory and resident waterfowl and gulls. Facilitate connectivity through the park to the Finger Lakes Trail system. The complex of interventions is sited to preserve the healthiest trees and remove those that had become a safety hazard regularly dropping limbs in the park.

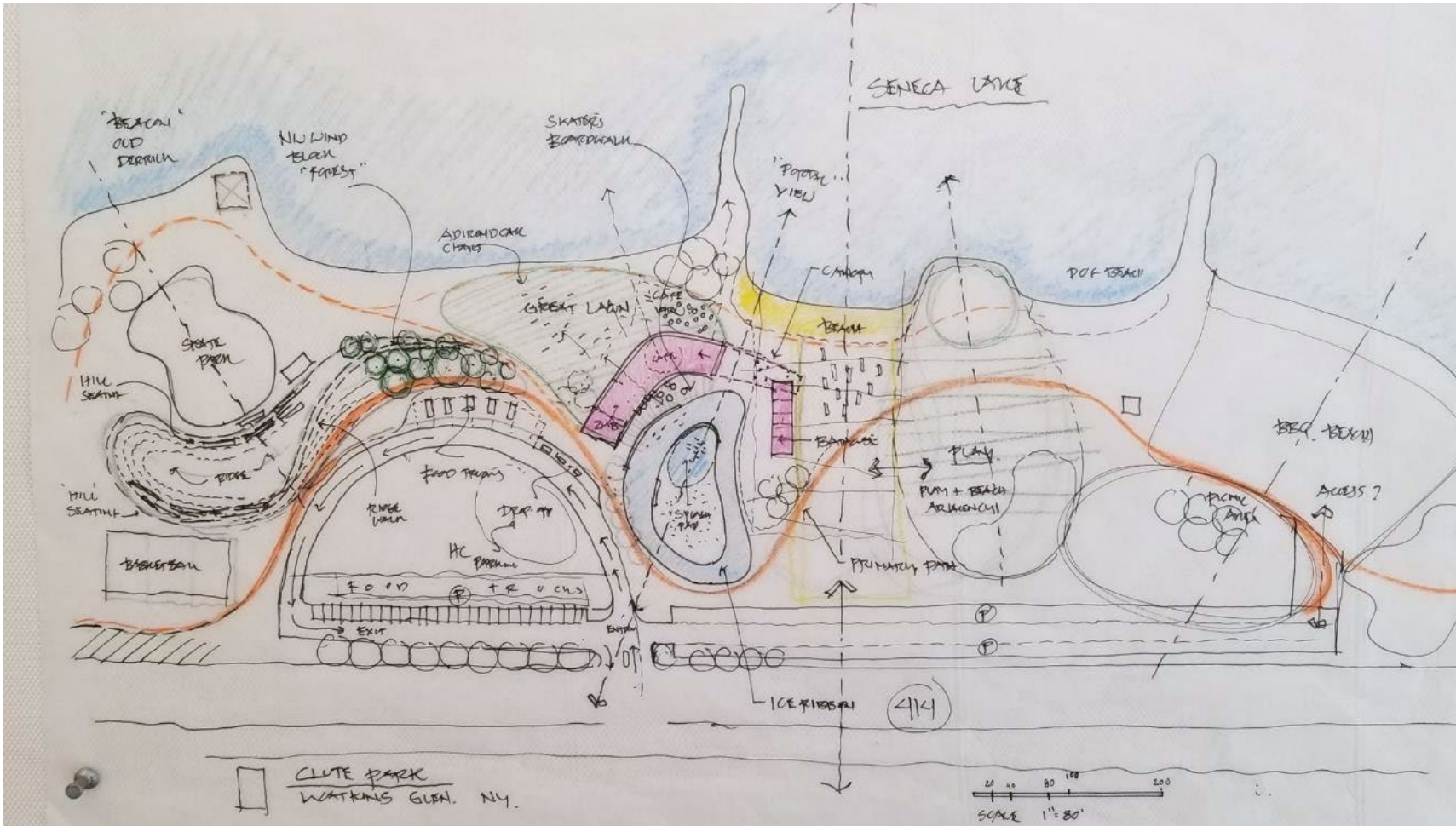
With the goal of providing a four-season destination park, ice skating and winter festivals anchor seasonal programming. Located at the south end of Seneca Lake, winds regularly make winter activities unbearable. The Pavilion and Bath house were sited to block winter winds while their designs provide glazing to see through to the lake and expansive views to the north. Seasonal but solid dasher boards limit further the amount of wind that would degrade the quality of the ice and experience.

Prior to the project, moderate rains would flood the park for days. The new buildings, patio, rink and splash pad are elevated one foot above the flood plain. Storm water is managed in three connected basins designed with pervious fill to perk to lower strata that was previously blocked by organic and waste fill. The splash pad was designed with low flow fixtures and enhanced with LED lighting to enhance the experience. The reduced flows minimize wastewater which is captured and diverted to the village treatment facility rather than discharging directly to the lake.

Design for Economy: How does the project efficiently meet the program and design challenges and provide "more with less"?

The Clute Park Redevelopment is one piece of multiple projects funded through Downtown Revitalization (DRI), Local Waterfront Revitalization Program (LWRP), and State Parks grants. Together the grants and the projects strengthen walkable, vibrant, and thriving communities, environments, and economies. Within the park, the design captures and delivers the emotive qualities of programs valued in aggregate beyond the funding available. To realize the total program envisioned in the DRI, spaces and features must support multiple programs.

The bathhouse is designed to provide summer lifeguard offices and first aid facilities, and winter ice skate rental and concessions space. The café in the Events Center (Pavilion) provides community staffed concessions during public events but is reset with refreshments and beverages for private events and parties. The existing 1923 pavilion provides wide open break out space that the Village intends to renovate in future phases. Combined with the events space, café, and patios, the size, variety and flow of possible events are numerable. A community meeting room also serves as the bridal party's retreat during weddings. Demand on the complex in the first full year of operations necessitated the installation of a second temporary pavilion. Phase II scope will further elevate the integration of landscaping, an accessible playground, and trails improvements into the park and through the completed redevelopment project.



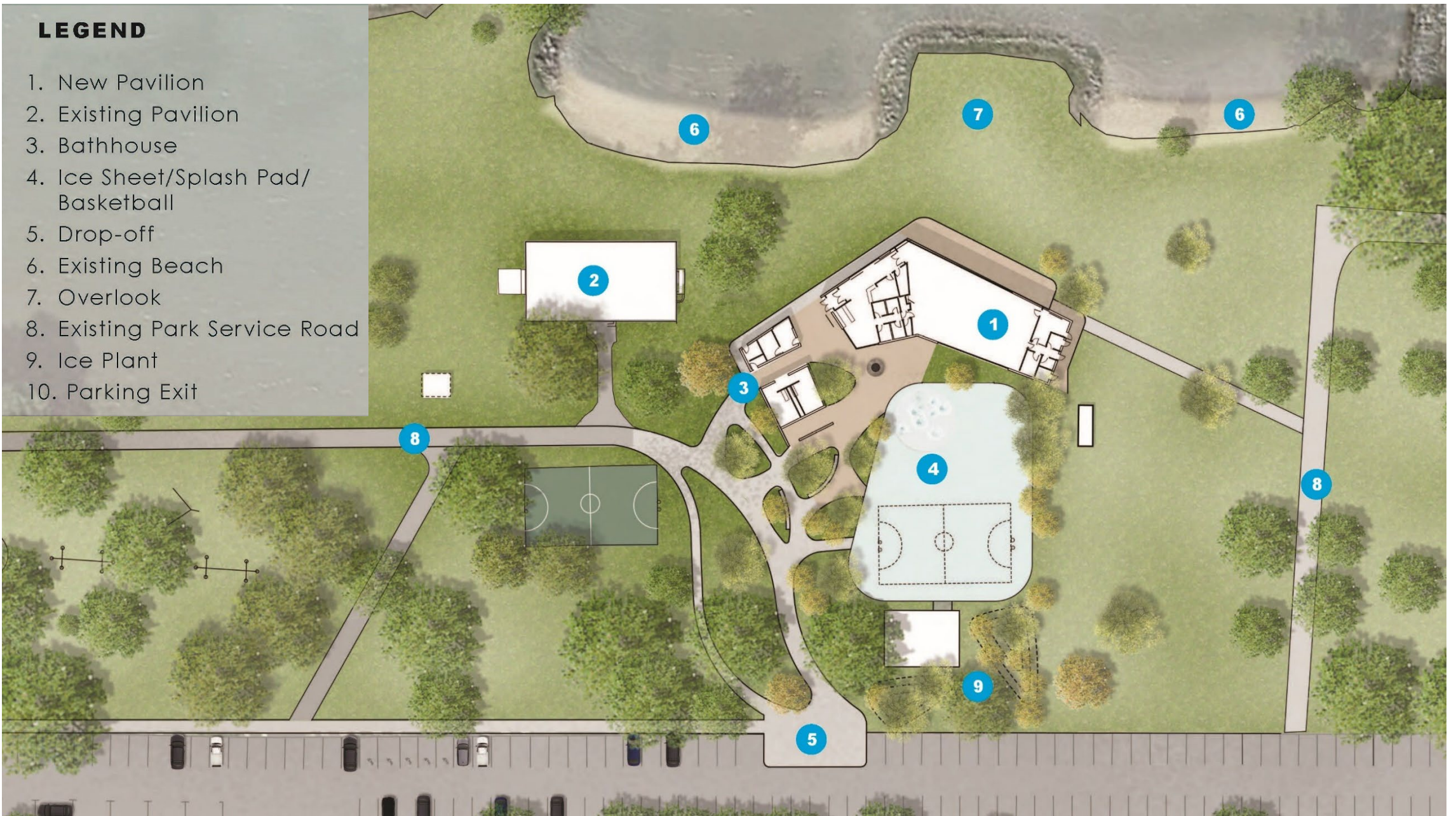
Design Thoughts

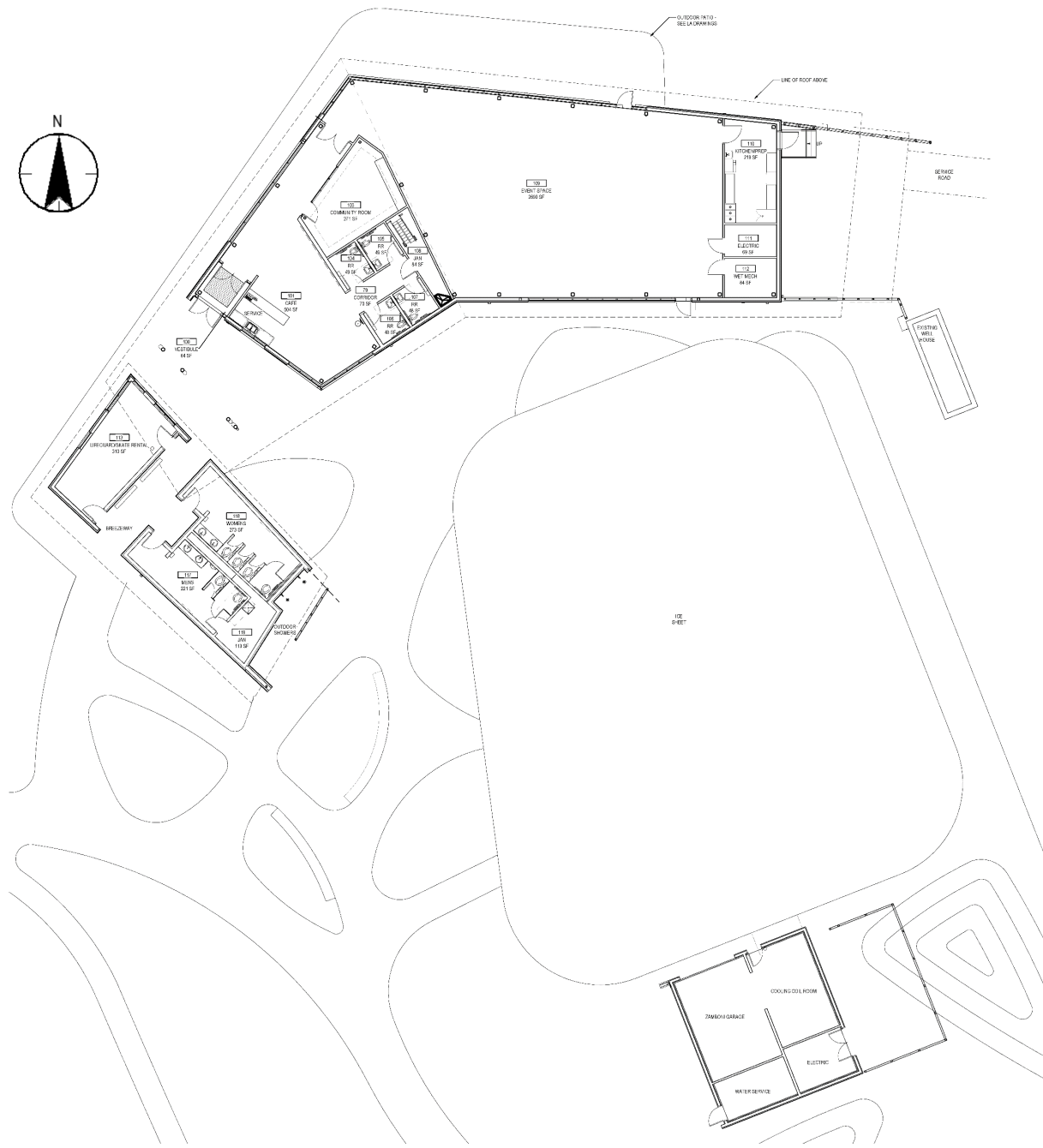
- Create a pavilion and ice rink that acts as threshold between the lake and the park.
- Establish an axis through the pavilion that aligns with the park and boat launch road to the south.
- Integrate natural paths through and around the pavilion elements to a larger network of trails.
- Celebrate a public lobby, café and potential restaurant as the center of the pavilion with reciprocal views to the lake and the glen.
- Position the skate rentals and bath house components as integrated wings that both protect and integrate the ice rink and splash pad experience.
- Locate and buffer the drop off road and food trucks to the east of the pavilion elements.
- Create solid wall areas for movie nights and projections.
- Offer protective design of the pavilion to shade and shelter in all seasons.
- Establish a new community and sense of place that celebrates nature, wellness and activities for all generations and abilities.



LEGEND

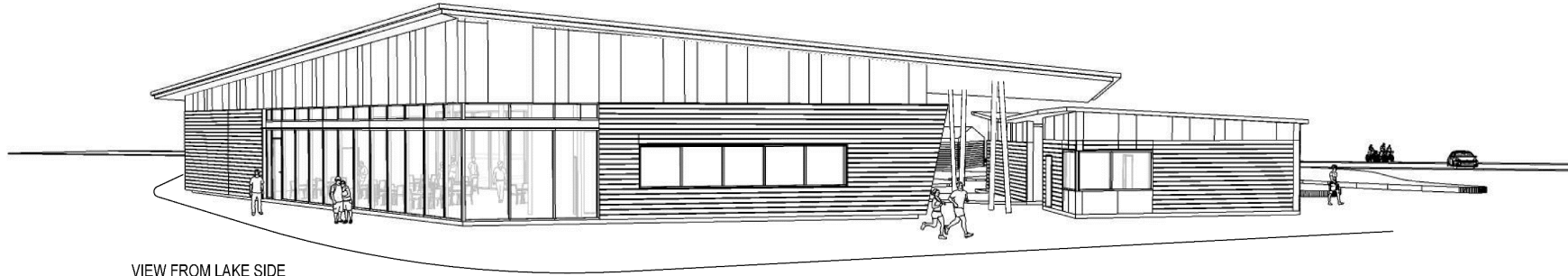
1. New Pavilion
2. Existing Pavilion
3. Bathhouse
4. Ice Sheet/Splash Pad/
Basketball
5. Drop-off
6. Existing Beach
7. Overlook
8. Existing Park Service Road
9. Ice Plant
10. Parking Exit



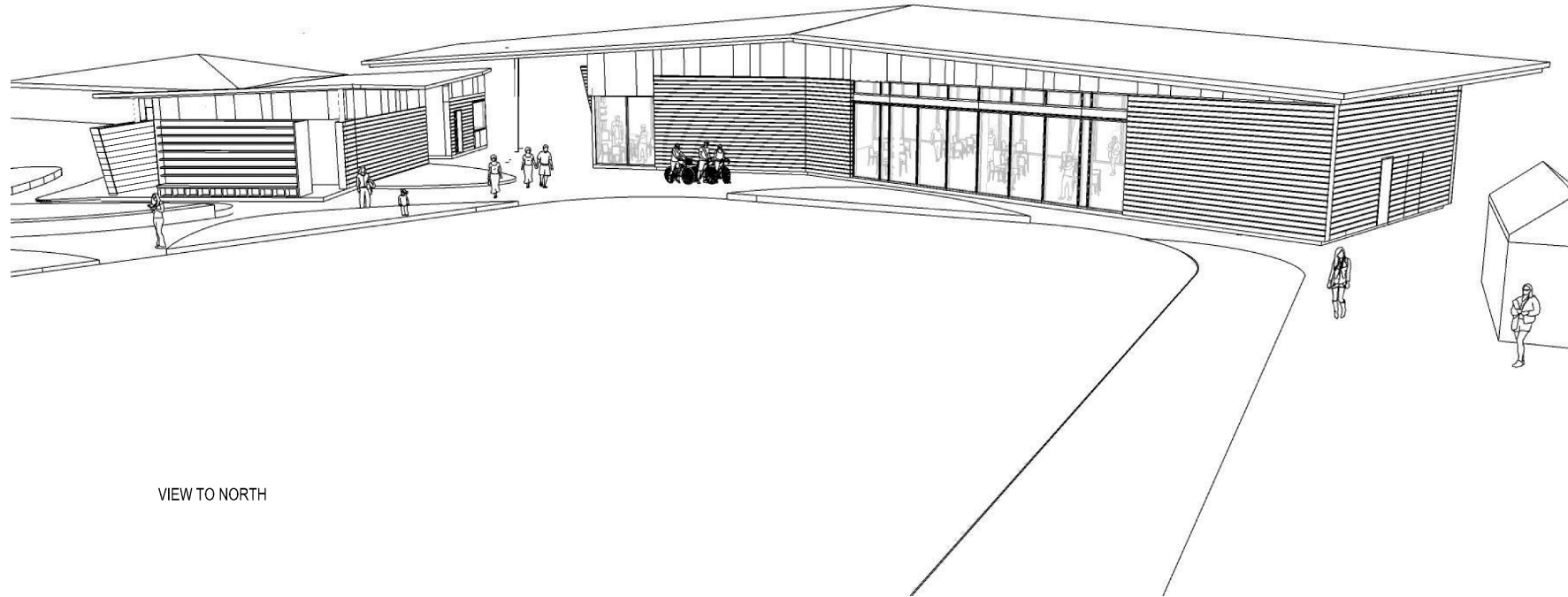


Pavilion, Bathhouse, and Ice Building

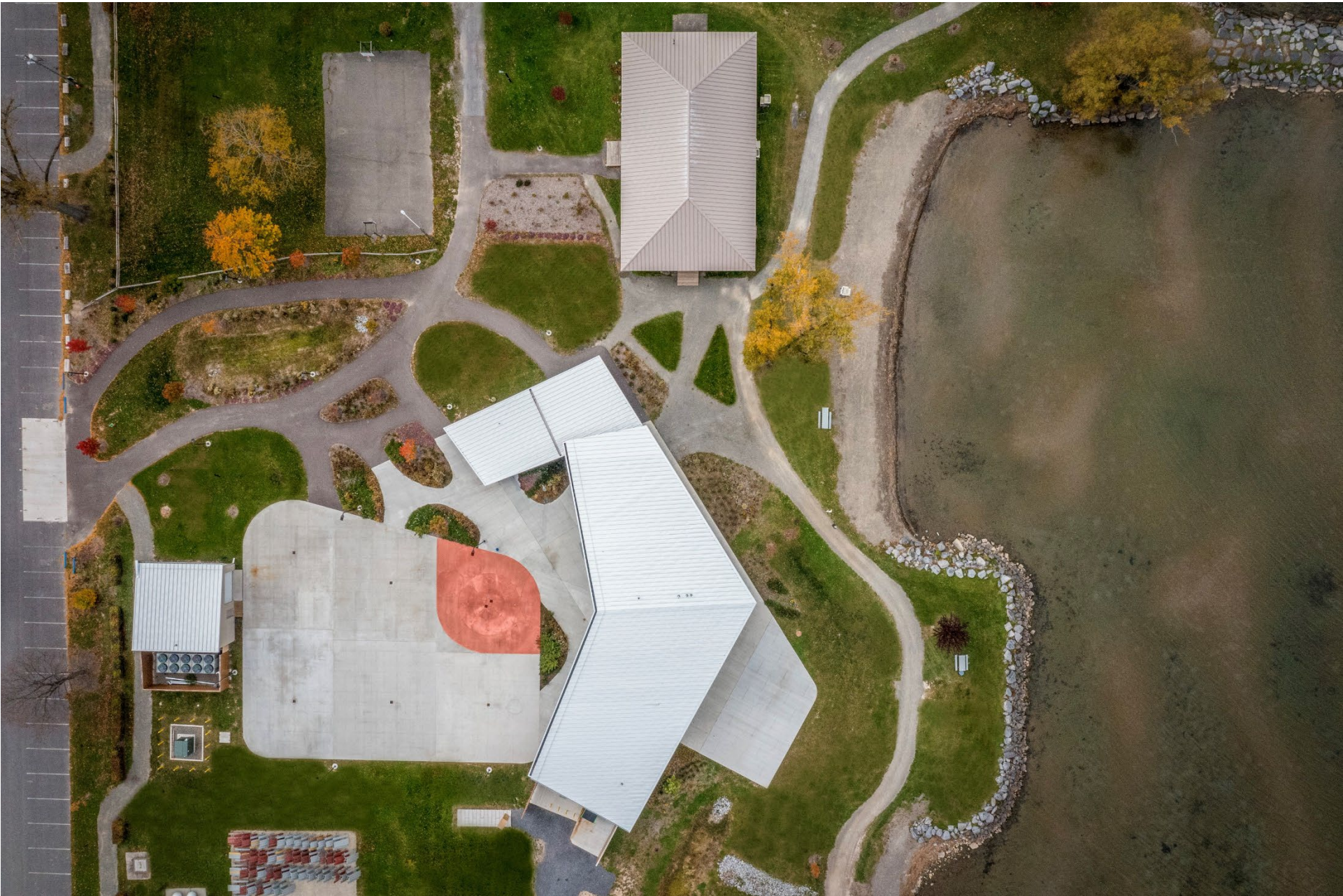




VIEW FROM LAKE SIDE



VIEW TO NORTH



Aerial View (north to right)

Credit: Van Zandbergen Photography 2023-26



Aerial View Looking North



Aerial View Looking South



Entrance Looking North



Patio Looking North

Credit: Van Zandbergen Photography 2023-26



Bathhouse & Skate Rental Looking North

Credit: Van Zandbergen Photography 2023-26



Pavilion & Bathhouse Looking South

Credit: Van Zandbergen Photography 2023-26



Events Space Looking Southwest



Events Space Looking Northwest



Cafe Looking South



Cafe Looking North

