Cheverly Town Park Master Plan
Thanks to people involved:

Introduction
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Photos on covers, facing, and current pages courtesy of Kathyrn Andrews
Programmatic:
The Town Park is very well used, in fact this process might not have been necessary if it weren’t. It seems to always have something going on, which means there are a lot of people who care and are willing to help in the effort to improve it. That spirit of interest is one of the park’s strongest assets.

Environmental:
A well developed canopy of tall shade trees is hard to find in today’s neighborhoods making the trees in Cheverly exceptional. The Town Park is no exception. Being situated on a hill does offer some trials, but it is definitely helpful for town concerts and events by providing a natural amphitheater.

Strengths
A very involved and engaged community
Healthy, large shade trees
The pavilion is well used
A thriving farmers market
Location adjacent to the community center
Environmental:
The Park’s stormwater situation is at a critical point. Runoff from the building runs unhindered from top to bottom on the hill and has caused serious erosion. There are 3 major paths of travel for runoff. Firstly, water from the road is directed into a concrete swale and carried to the bottom of the hill. Runoff from the building seems to travel through the center of the park, while the tennis and basketball courts drain towards the woods. Each pathway shows signs of erosion to varying degrees. While lawn and tall trees creates a stately, serene environment, unfortunately it provides little to no environmental benefits and is especially ineffective at managing stormwater, so there is also erosion in deeply shaded areas of the park.

Programmatic:
The programmatic elements of the park aren’t used efficiently anymore. The basketball court is heavily used, while the tennis courts are empty. The weekend Market is a great success, but visitors have little space to mingle. The playground is well used, but doesn’t reflect the current trends in child development and play. There is also the issue of meeting ADA standards which require accessible paths between all park features.

Weaknesses
Space is very constrained
No existing ADA path and a consistently steep grade
Existing Erosion
Serious stormwater management needs
Recreational usage isn’t distributed well;
  some areas stand empty while others overflow
Master Plan
Overview of Elements
Based on the conditions found through the analysis, a set of recommended projects were identified. They as a whole address the weaknesses determined, and build on the strengths present. These projects address the environmental and programmatic elements of the park, with the common goal of moving the park towards a healthier and better used state.

Path and Playground

Planting Projects

Recreation Re-Configuration

Long-term Possibilities
Path and Playground

Increasing the accessibility of the park and its playground is a community goal, though it is now also required by the 2010 ADA standards. In basic terms, the ADA requirements specify that whenever an element of a public facility is renovated the path to that element must be brought into ADA compliance. But the kind of planning and labor that goes into building a path, would be most efficient and cost effective if the entire park were considered, as opposed to doing it piecemeal. Because it makes the most sense for the playground improvements to take place first, a path through the park should be created with the same project. Not only would it be smart planning, but it would also best demonstrate the values of the community.

Playground Improvements:
The playground at Town Park is well loved and well used. Unfortunately, it doesn’t offer much by way of accessible play, and the space lacks cohesion. Also, the current trends in childhood development suggest providing more opportunities for children to play in and with Nature. The Town Park playground is perfectly situated in a well shaded, forest edge location and it would be natural to gear the next stage of the park towards highlighting this connection. There are many opportunities to offer accessible, traditional playground features, while also offering more exploratory elements to serve all kinds of local children.
Restoration Gardens:
Because grass doesn’t grow well in the shade, the worn areas underneath the shade trees need to be addressed by a more ecological approach including woodland shrubs and perennials. These gardens are meant for both stabilization and to create opportunities for soil building. These plantings can have the added goal of being educational gardens with purposes like providing habitat, or demonstrating a food forest. Gardens can also be incorporated into the suggested natural play areas.

Shade Tree Planting:
The Park’s beautiful canopy is one of it’s most defining features. The best way to insure it stays that way is to start planting new trees that will be ready as these start to age. After all, the best time to plant a tree is twenty years ago.

Rain Gardens:
Strategically placing rain gardens and other understory plantings along the pathways will help to slow water as well as provide more opportunities for infiltration. Rain gardens differ because the soil should be prepared to the depth of a two to three feet, and formed into a depression. Because of the intense soil disturbance, they shouldn’t be located too close to existing tree roots. In general the restoration gardens are in the shade, and rain gardens should be in sunny locations.

A rule of thumb should be to focus stormwater management efforts near the community center, which is the main source of runoff, and then add more downhill as needed. Adding cisterns to the downspouts will help control runoff as well.

Phasing
Planting Projects
Multi-Use Courts:
Because the tennis courts are under-used, and the basketball court is over-used, it makes sense to rearrange these functions. Converting the existing tennis courts into multi-use courts, would allow for 2 basketball courts, 1 tennis court, 1 futsal court, and the possibility of other smaller games. The use of these courts should have a schedule to reduce conflicts.

Gathering Spot:
Moving the basketball court opens up space which should be used for more gathering space. It’s location next to the community center and the Farmers’ Market makes it an idea social space. This area could be an unprogrammed area that is available for casual interactions and sometimes be used for organized community events like small concerts or outdoor movies. The design should allow for maximum flexibility and material choices should reflect the community’s desire to live sustainably. It should connect smoothly to the parking lot, community building, and incorporate the trail head. Potentially it could incorporate permanent seating structures around the edges, in addition to moveable seating. Considering the heavy usage of the pavilion, a smaller pavilion might be built on site as well. If the asphalt is removed, there are many opportunities for sustainable site improvements, including rain gardens or permeable paving.
**Amphitheater:**
The hill is well used for watching fireworks and concerts on Cheverly. Once the stage is built there will be more opportunities to use the space. It could be made more of a community amenity by building it into a grassed, supported amphitheater. It will also protect the hill from erosion, which becomes more of an issue with more use.

**Infiltration Trench:**
The future park has opportunities to not only manage stormwater, but to demonstrate cutting edge stormwater practices by replacing the concrete conveyance system, which lines the road between the upper and lower parking lot, with an infiltration trench. The design possibilities are wide, but in general, will include excavating a trench which is filled with stone to create a reservoir to hold water as it drains into the soil. The area can then be planted above.