EASTERN PROM CHILDREN'S PLAYGROUND

WILL'S PLAYGROUND

Community Workshop #1
October 26, 2026

parks, recreation & facilities

Weston & Sampson design studio



AGENDA

Introductions

Project Timeline

Project Background

What We've Heard So Far

Our Observations So Far

Play Design Considerations

Open Discussion + Walkabout



PROJECT TEAM

City of Portland

Ethan Hipple
Director of Parks, Recreation and Facilities

Alex Marshall
Parks Division Director

Tatyana Vashchenko
Project Manager

Weston & Sampson's Design Studio

Cassie Bethoney, RLA
Practice Leader - Landscape Architecture

Allison Gramolini, RLA, CPSI
Project Landscape Architect

Rebecca Bagdigian
Landscape Designer II

WORKING GROUP

Friends of the Eastern Promenade
David Bannon

Portland Parks Conservancy
Jack Phillips

Munjoy Hill Neighborhood Association
Mike Dixon

Tempo Arts Center
Laura McDermit

Portland Parks Commission
Alex Lopez DelVecchio

Portland Public Schools
Maya Lena

Children's Museum and Theatre of Maine
Brandon Pullen

Trust for Public Land
Betsy Cook

Natural Helpers
Fernanda McLaughlin

Portland Boys and Girls Club
Joseph Garrison

Portland Housing Authority
Jason Reseda

PROJECT TIMELINE

We are here!
Community Workshop #1
Oct. 26, 2026

Community Workshop #2
Late Fall 2026

Community Workshop #3
Winter 2027

Online Survey #1 & Pop Up Events
Community Wishes

Online Survey #2
Review Concepts

Project Kickoff & Site Assessment
FALL 2026

CONCEPTUAL DESIGN
LATE FALL 2026

PREFERRED DESIGN
WINTER 2026 - 2027

PERMITTING & CONSTRUCTION DRAWINGS
SPRING - FALL 2027

BIDDING & CONSTRUCTION
THRU FALL 2028

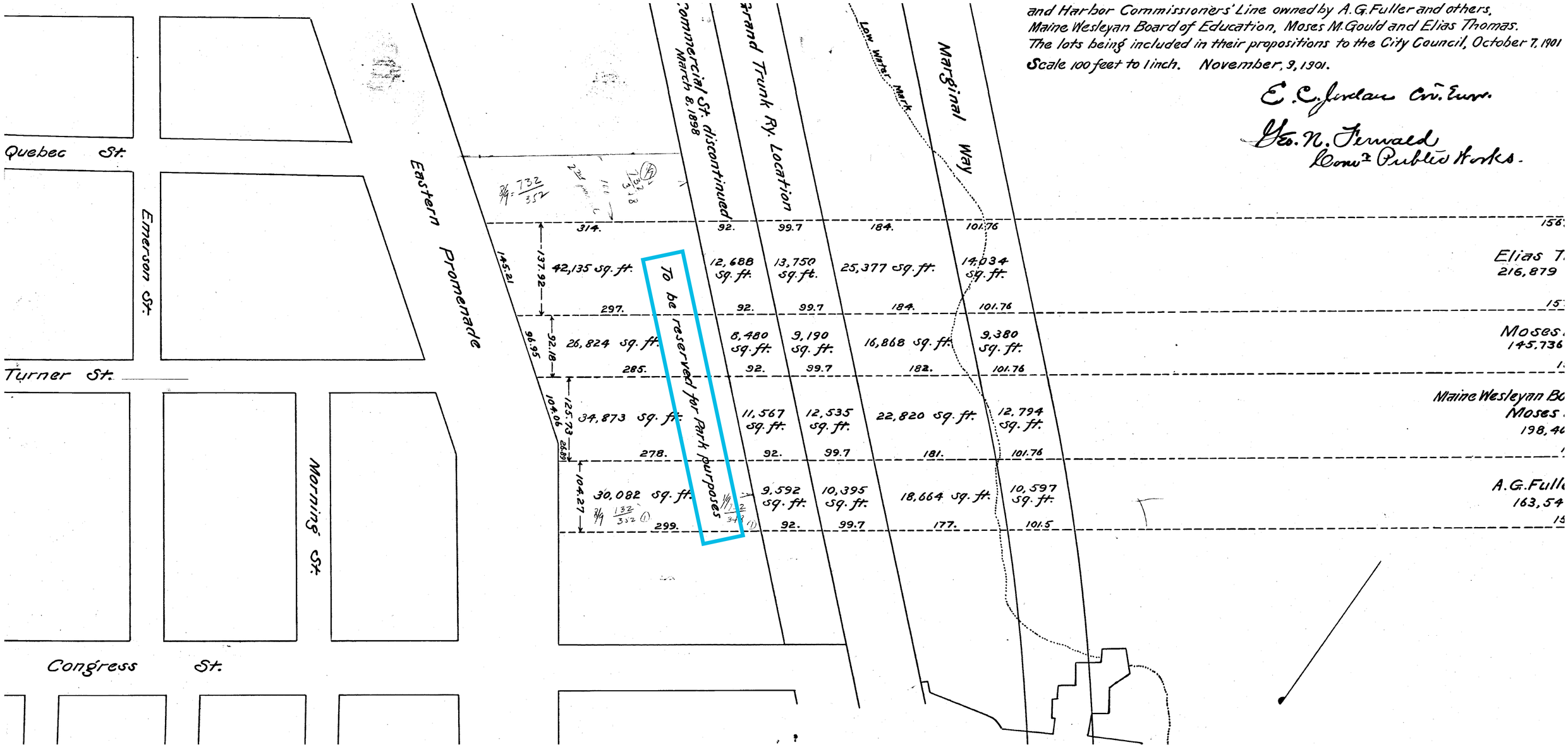
Topo Survey & Site Investigation
Early Fall 2026

Historic Preservation Review

Site Plan Review

PROJECT BACKGROUND

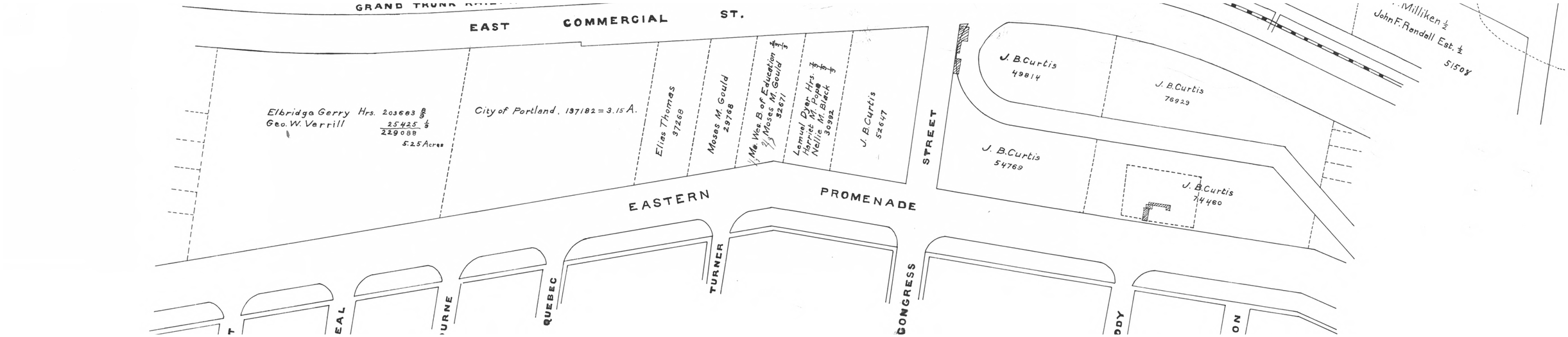
PLANNING THE EASTERN PROM

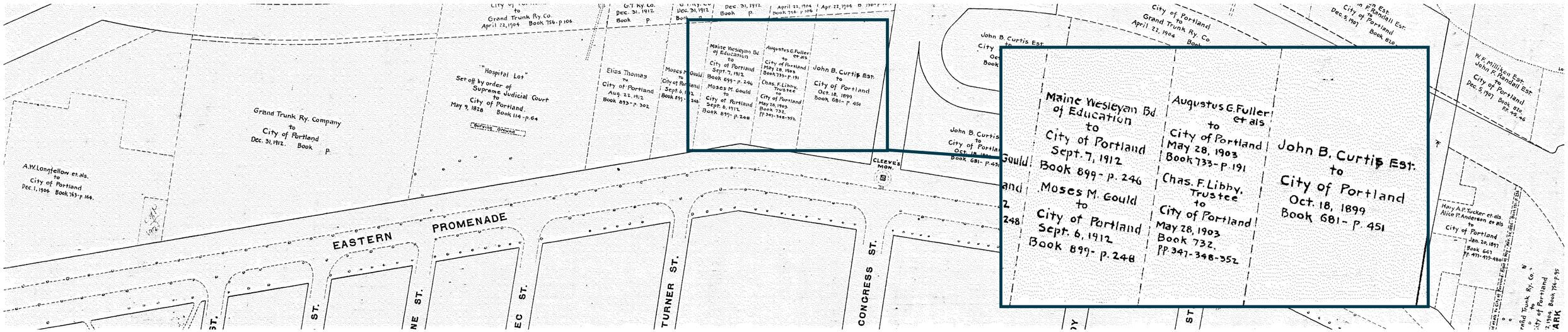


The City of Portland began purchasing land for the creation of the Eastern Promenade in 1828, with additional land purchased incrementally thereafter. This 1901 plan shows land marked as "To be reserved for park purposes."

PROJECT BACKGROUND

PLANNING THE EASTERN PROM

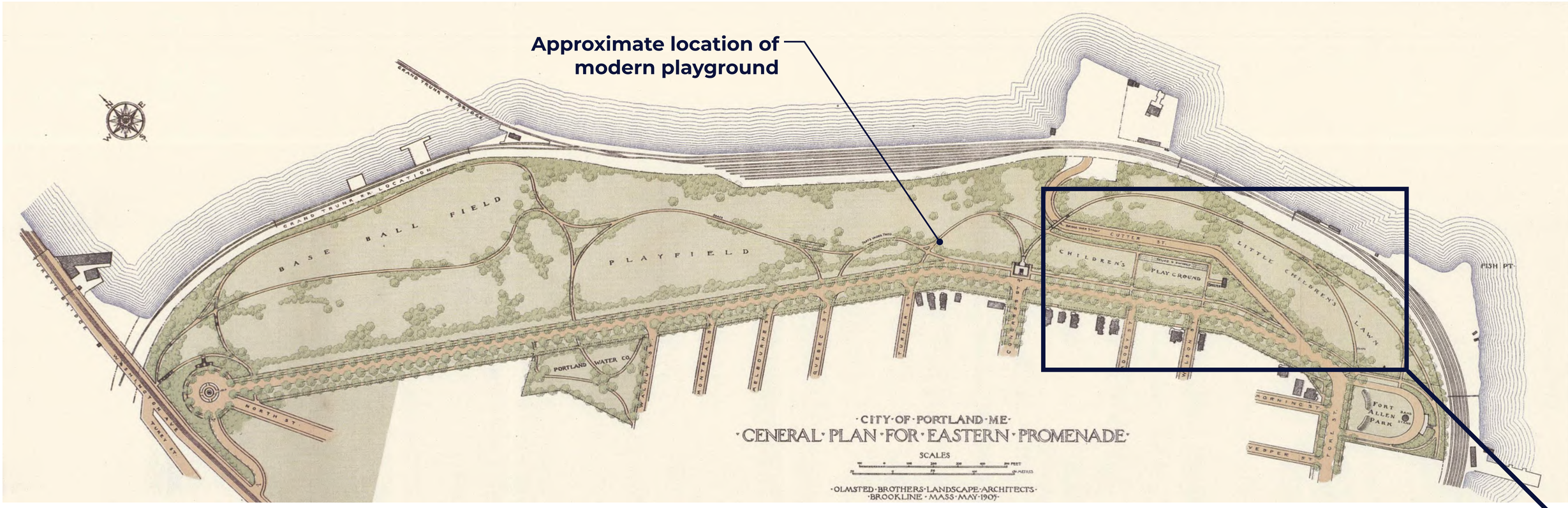




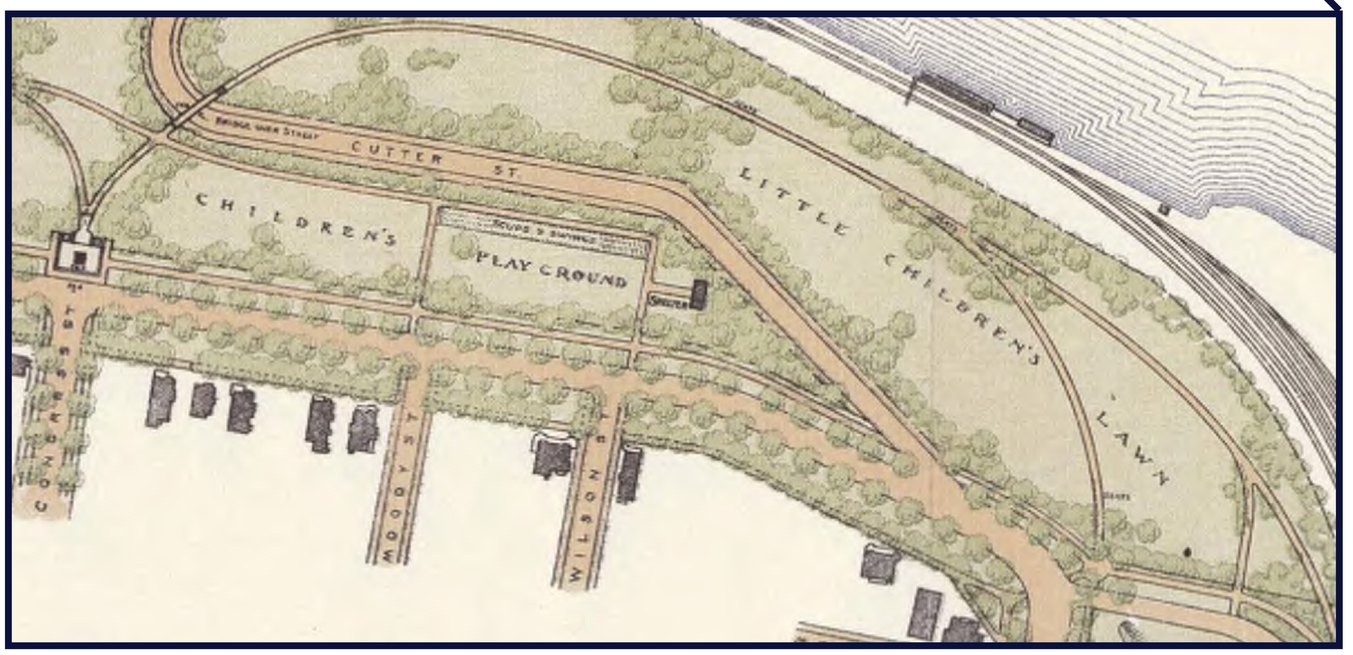
These undated plans demonstrate the City's efforts to purchase land for the new park. The earlier plan (top) shows land under private ownership, while the later plan shows that most of the land required for the park is listed as 'To the City of Portland', with dates ranging from 1899-1912.

PROJECT BACKGROUND

PLAY DATES BACK TO THE 1905 MASTER PLAN

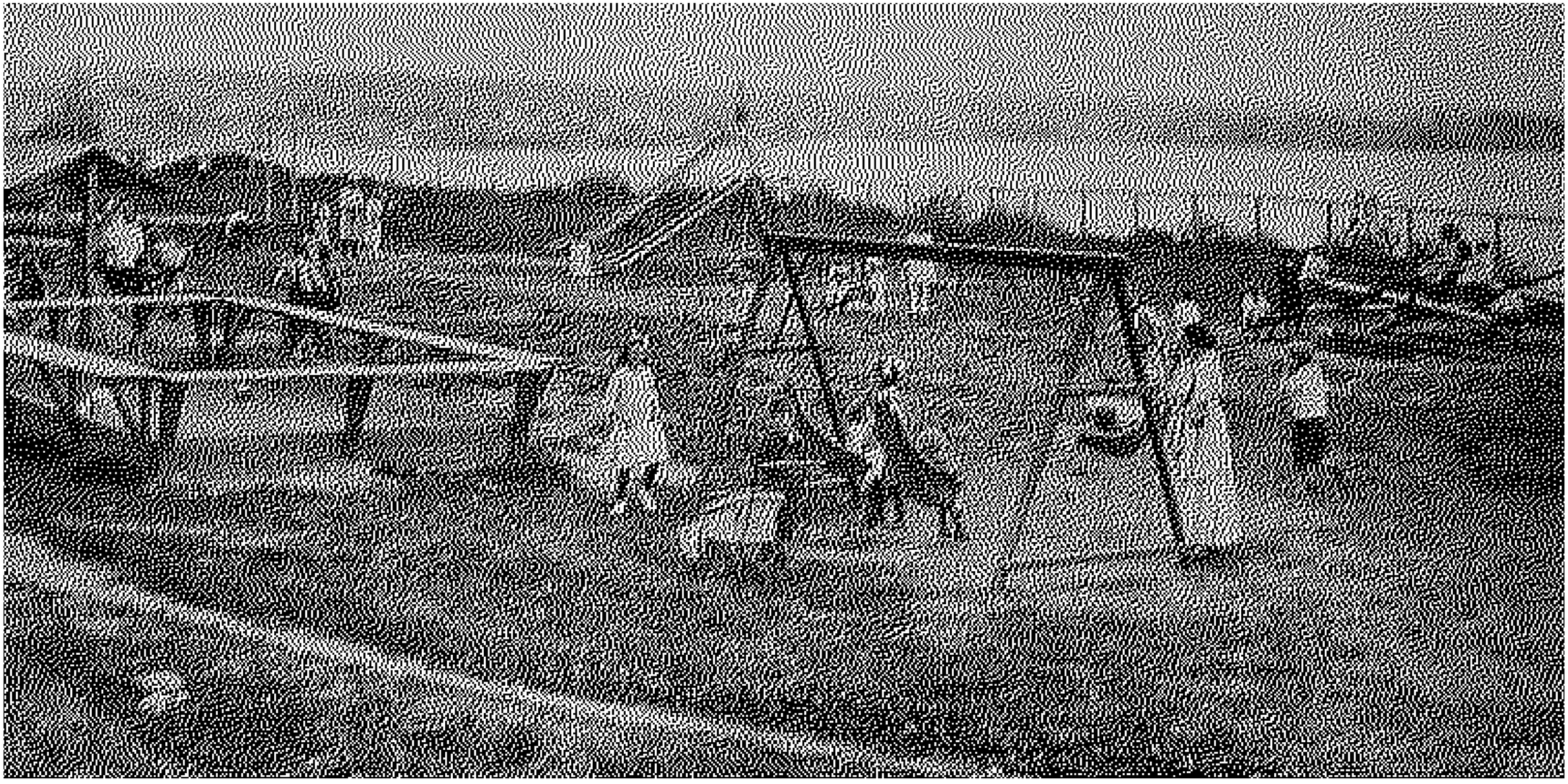


The Olmsted Brothers' 1905 plan for the Eastern Promenade was play-focused, with a Children's Playground and a "Little Children's Lawn" with sand courts under the shade of trees



PROJECT BACKGROUND

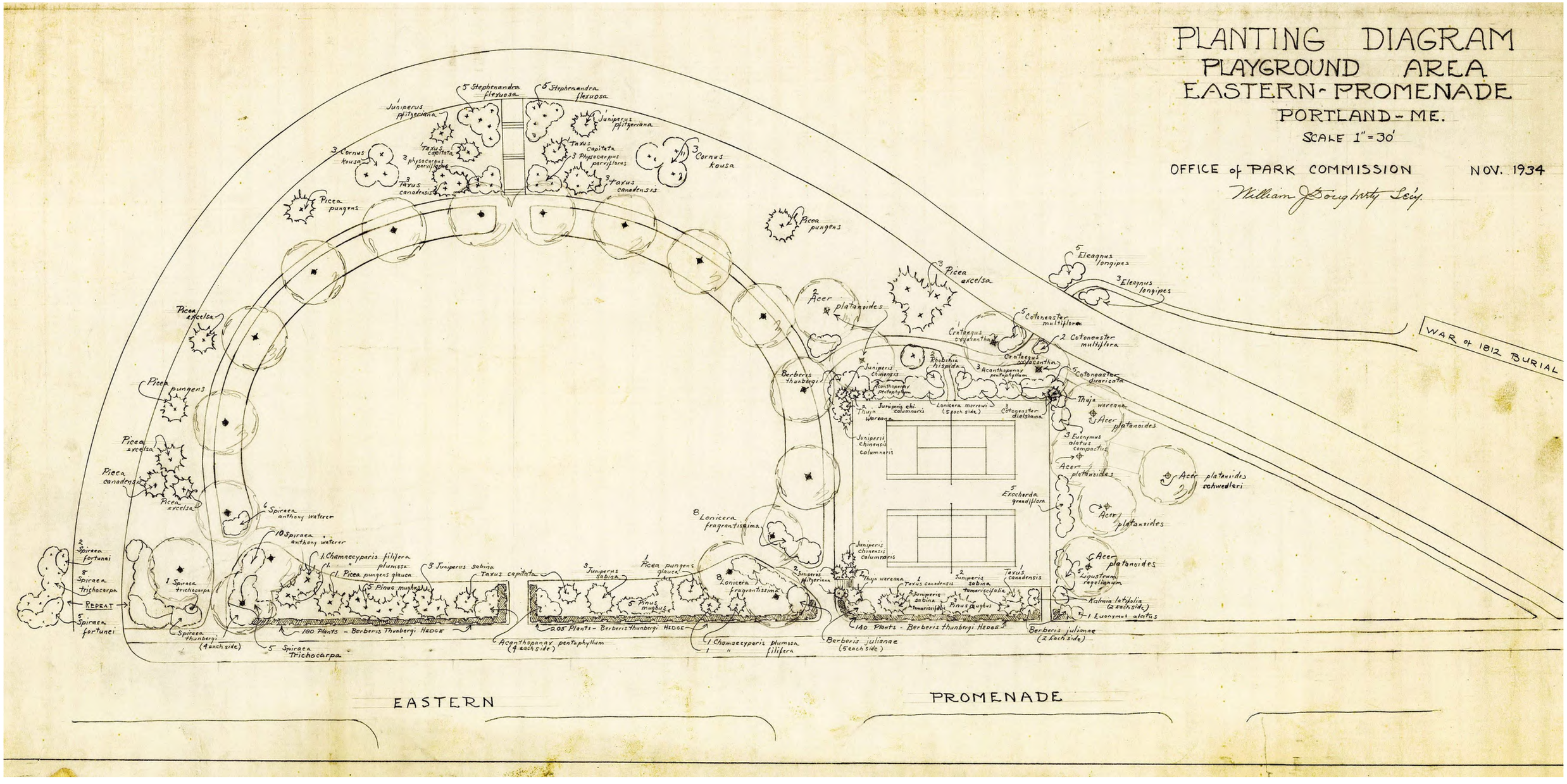
1910s PLAY



By 1916, a playground had been established at the foot of Turner Street with volleyball, basketball, swings and slides. This 1917 photo shows children playing in their new space.

PROJECT BACKGROUND

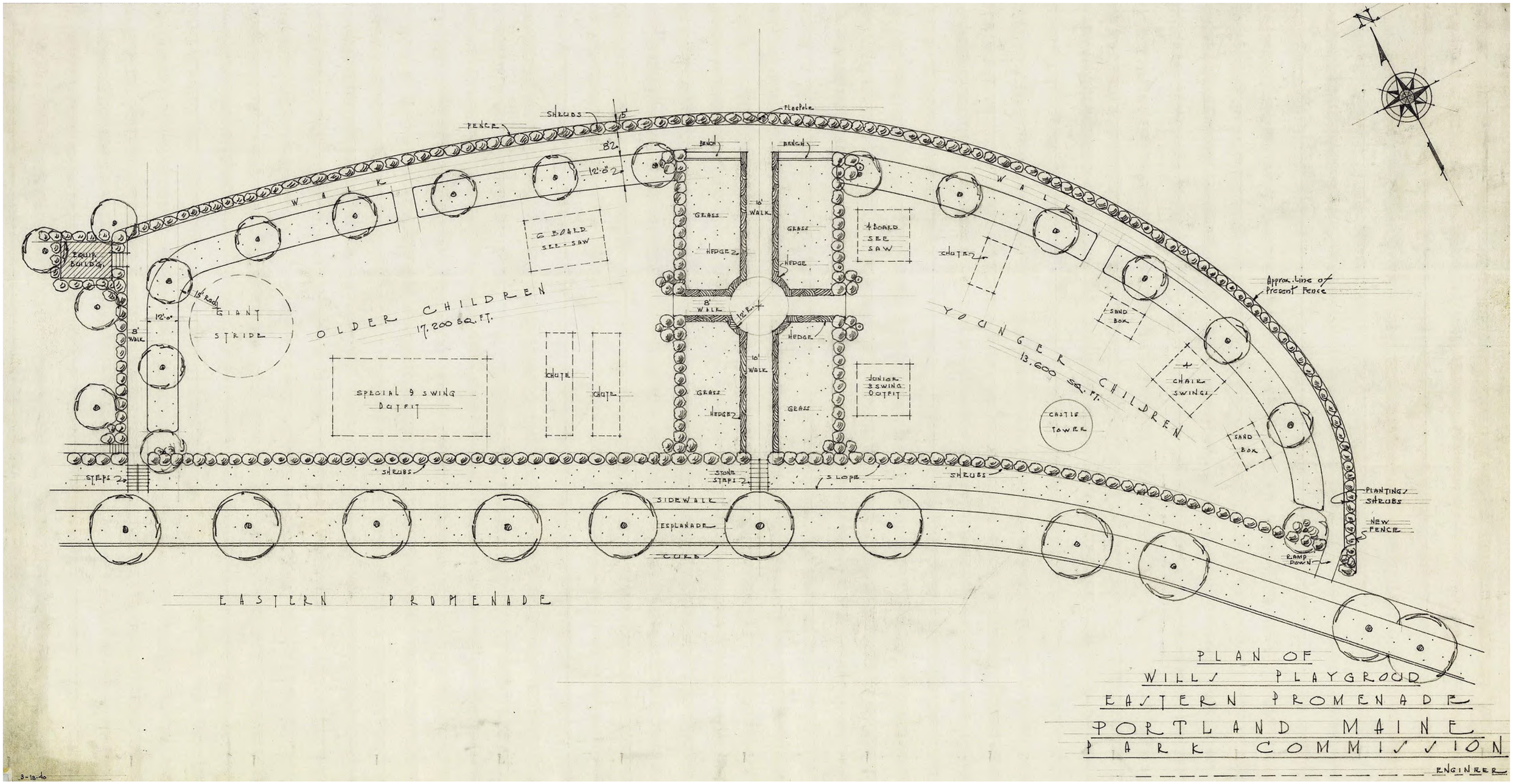
1930s PLAY



The 1930s saw significant upgrades, including expanding the playground and adding softball fields and tennis courts. This detailed 1934 planting plan highlights the city's level of effort during this period.

PROJECT BACKGROUND

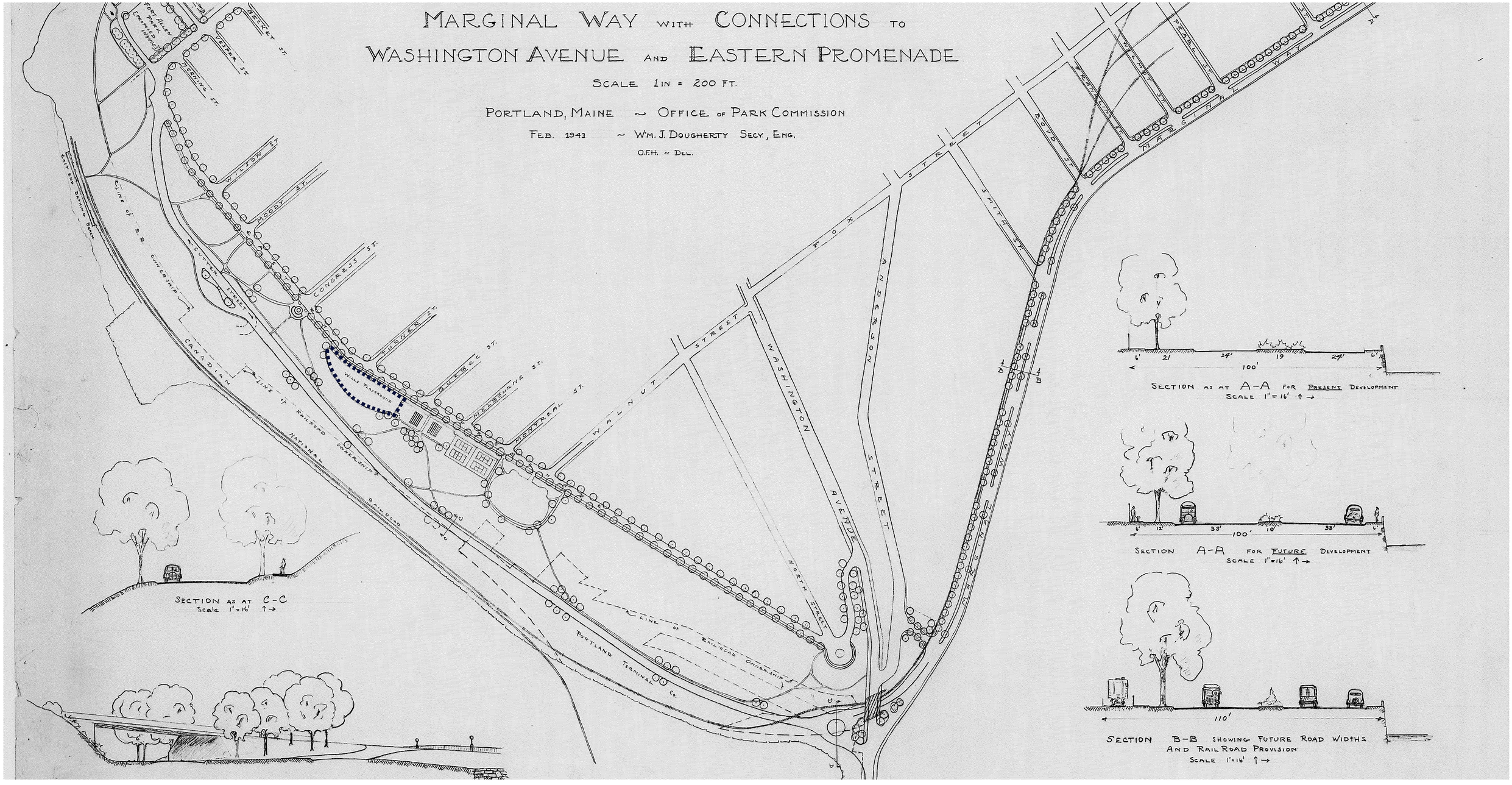
1940s PLAY



Detailed drawings from this 1942 set split the playground into older and younger children's areas with swings, chutes, and see-saws

PROJECT BACKGROUND

1940s PLAY



By 1943, the park included a playground, 3 tennis courts, 2 softball fields, a skating area and a saltwater bathing beach.

PROJECT BACKGROUND

1970s PLAY







The playground was relocated to its current location in 1972 as part of the Urban Beautification Program. These 1975 photos show a woman pushing her grandchildren on the swings, which sit in the same arch-shaped frame present today.

PROJECT BACKGROUND

1970s LANDFILL



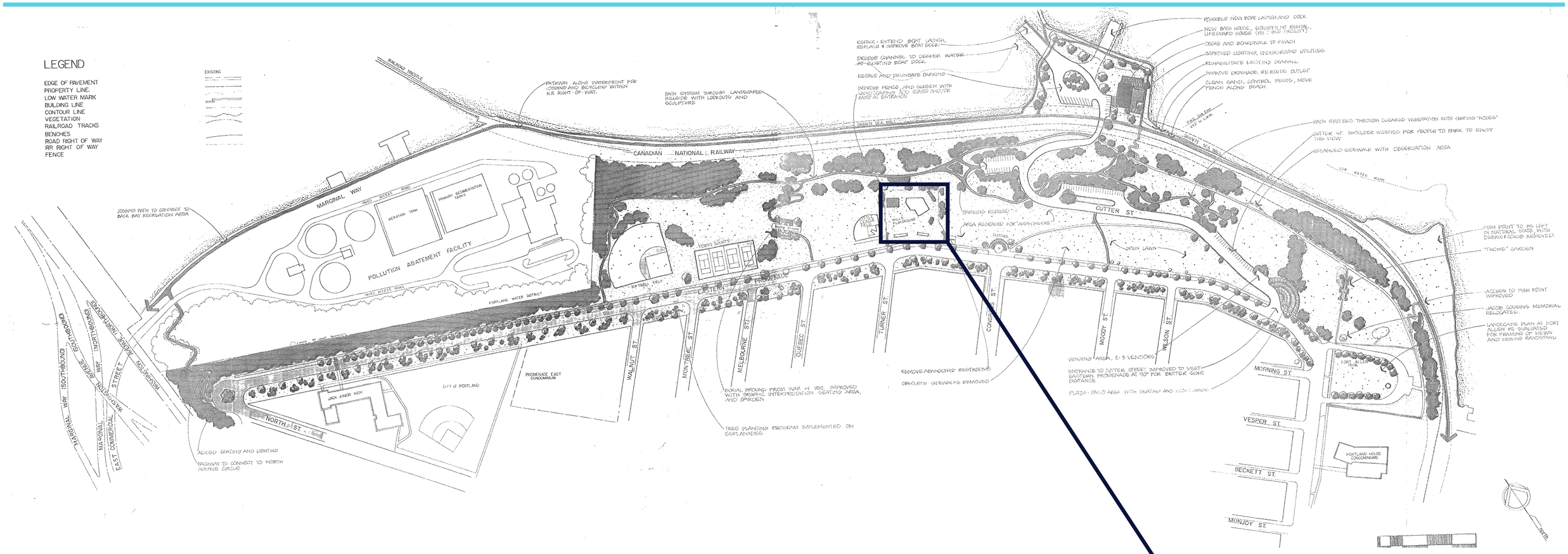


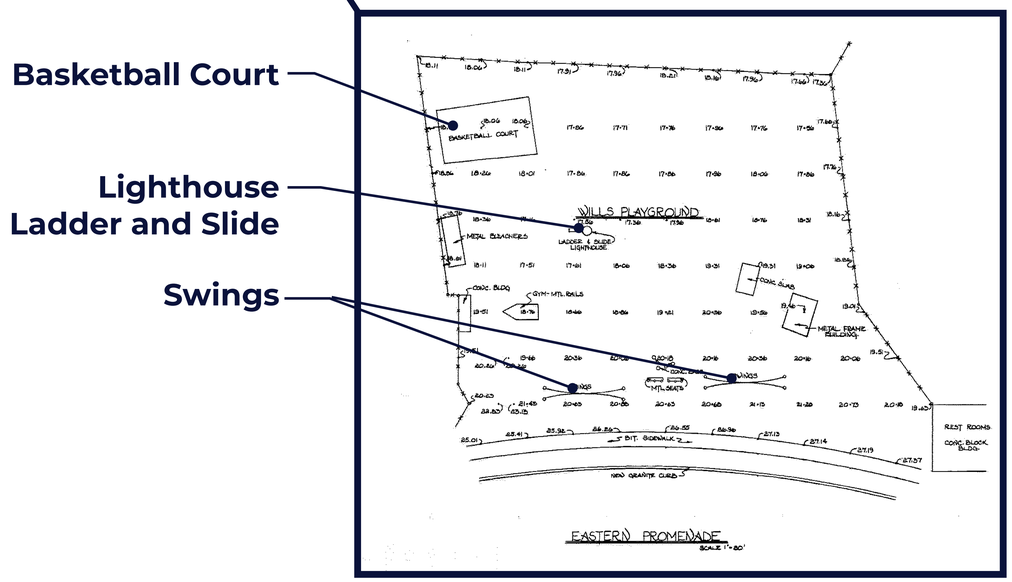
The creation of the Cutter Street Landfill in the late 1970s significantly shaped the park. Grading plans call for the creation of a wide plateau leading to the steep slope between the playground/ballfield and Casco Bay that can be seen on the site today.

The landfill project also included planting dense shrubs, like multiflora rose and Japanese barberry. Today, these plants are considered invasive. Further study of the vegetated slope may be included in this project.

PROJECT BACKGROUND

1985 MASTER PLAN





A new master plan was developed for the Eastern Prom in 1985. It included a new playground design with added wooden jungle gyms and a lighthouse ladder and slide, while the swings were kept in place.

PROJECT BACKGROUND

1980s PLAY







The playground's new footprint can be seen in this aerial, dated 1986

PROJECT BACKGROUND

2000s PLAY AND THE PLAYGROUND TODAY







The play equipment was last replaced in the early 2000s, making it now over 20 years old.

WHAT WE'VE HEARD SO FAR

EARLY SURVEY RESULTS

What is your favorite thing about Will's Playground?

- Love the view!
- Options for different age ranges
- Swings!
- Being next to the water

What are your ideas for Will's Playground?

- Use natural play materials
- Use nature and nautical themes to tie into the surroundings
- More varied play options for all ages
- Needs more shade and seating!
- There's so much space - bigger structures!