

The Eli's Park Project

at Burke-Gilman Playground Park



Mission, History and Goals



Eli

Sweet Eli entered the world and changed everything. He included all people; all the time. Sometimes with a simple hi to anyone in range. Sometimes by climbing onto your lap for a hug. Sometimes by pressing his face so close to yours it was literally impossible to feel alone. Eli smiled for everyone with all the brightness and shine he possessed.

His life was a testament to the beauty and benefits of inclusion. In the not-quite four years Eli had, he left a path to follow toward a more inclusive world. The Eli's Park Project is committed to carrying on his legacy of love.

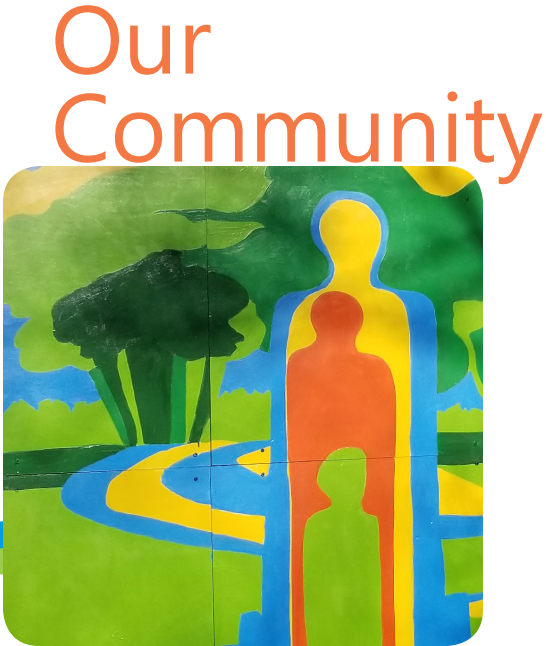


- Elijah Del Reischl, age 3

Inclusion is NOT a strategy to help people fit into the systems and structures which exist in our societies;
Inclusion is about transforming those systems and structures to make it better for everyone.
Inclusion is about creating a better world for everyone.
- Diane Richler

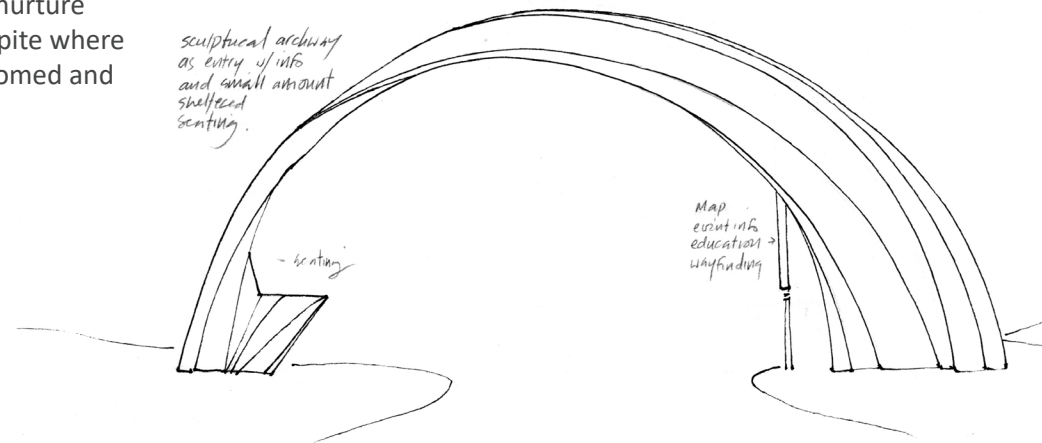
The Eli's Park Project began with a dream to build a space that celebrates the power of diversity in nature. What quickly emerged was a recognition that too many people in this world feel excluded, whether because of race, class, background, age or ability. The common thread we heard, is that when people don't have access to nature, they also feel isolated from the connections, time and community we build together in the natural environment.

From the beginning, our goal was to engage the people whose voices are often not heard. Our outreach was authentic and genuine because it stemmed from a place of love. We listened with open hearts. We earned trust. We built friendships. We watched community blossom. Together, our understanding grew and our vision expanded. Working alongside each other, we are imagining how we can transform the Burke-Gilman Playground Park into a beautiful place for everyone.



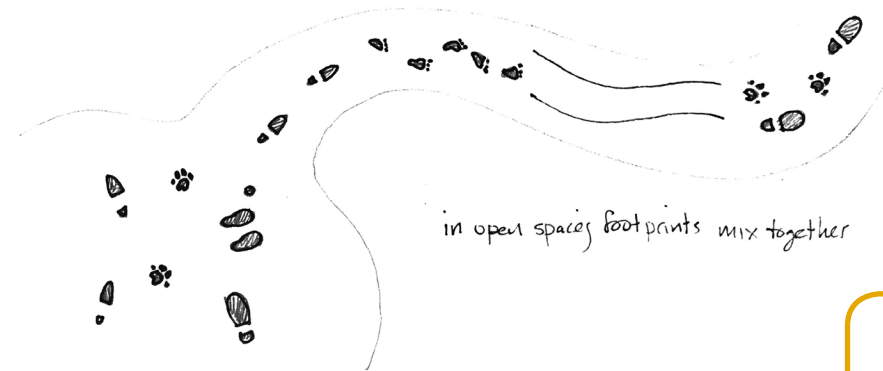
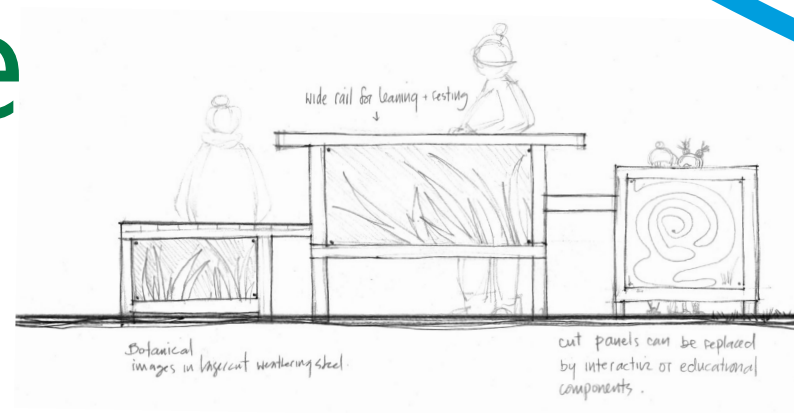
Come

The park will be a place where we all belong. A space designed to nurture and embrace inclusion. A respite where everyone who comes is welcomed and valued just the way they are.



Explore

The park will ensure that everyone, of all ages and abilities, can explore nature. With opportunities for quiet reflection and physical play, it will be a place for discovery and fun.

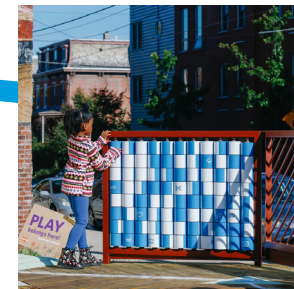


Belong

The park will be a multigenerational sanctuary for people of all abilities. It will be a safe haven that shines light on the beauty of our differences and embraces diversity by bringing people together.

When we choose to love, we choose to move against fear, against alienation and separation. The choice to love is a choice to connect, to find ourselves in the other.

- bell hooks



Opportunities for Inclusion

Seattle parks are celebrated cornerstones of our city. They define our neighborhoods and shape our communities. Yet of the 508 parks in our city, only one is holistically designed for inclusive play.

The experience of feeling isolated because people don't understand you goes beyond people with disabilities. The barriers of inclusion can be both physical and emotional. From age to race to income, many people feel left out in the world.

Our city needs more places where everyone feels welcome. We need more places where we can learn from each other through simple human interactions. Our community needs more parks where everyone can experience the simple joys of playing outside and being close to nature.

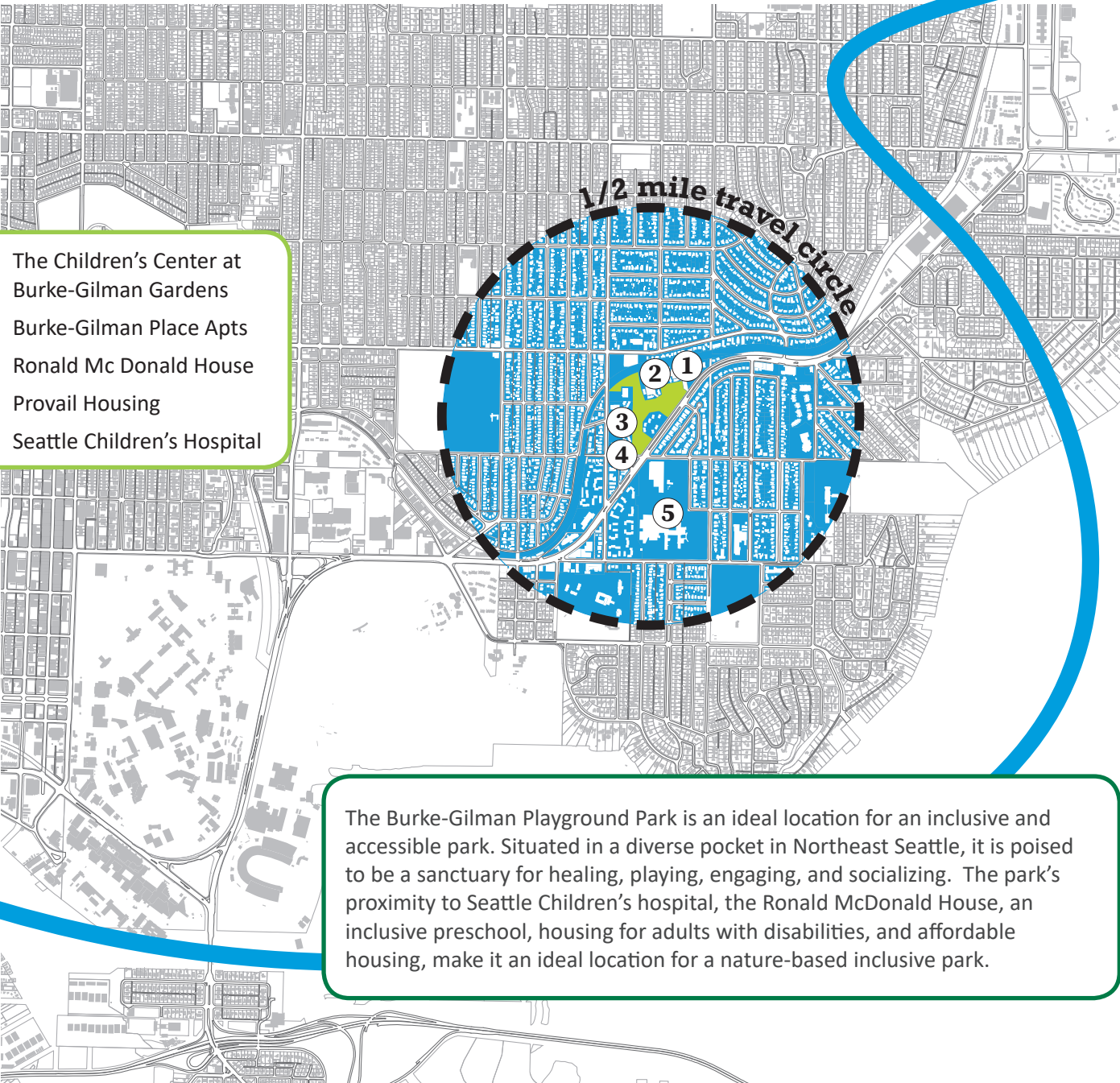
Medical research has proven that the natural environment can heal our bodies and ease our minds. Most inclusive parks are built structures with very little nature and most natural parks are not accessible for people with mobility limitations.

We have an opportunity to create a park for everyone to experience the power of nature and a place to belong. A park that will serve the local community and beyond.

Everybody is worth everything.
- Maya Angelou



Burke-Gilman Playground Park



Parallel Pathways



People are unique, and yet we share so much. The parallel pathways concept celebrates our togetherness, while honoring our differences. Two pathways encircle the park, winding together in parallel experiences of places and play. One path remains easily accessible for those who need smooth surfaces to navigate the park safely, while the other meanders off and loops back to offer a variety of experiences for those seeking challenges as they explore. It doesn't matter how you choose to access the space; the important thing is, we can all do it differently and together.

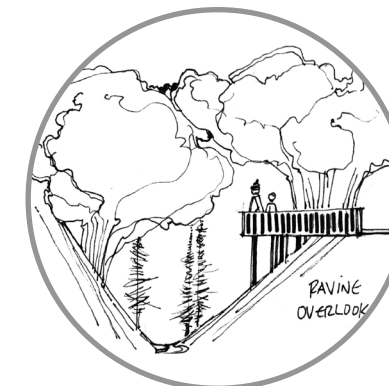


Accessible + Inclusive

We envision a park for people of all ages, backgrounds and abilities. Thoughtfully designed for inclusion, every part of the park will be accessible to everyone.

Sensory experiences and play pockets will invite children and adults, of all abilities, to strengthen their bodies, expand their minds and enrich their senses.

Thoughtful seating options will provide a diversity of experiences for both social engagement and quiet time in a cozy nook.



Nature-based

Nature will weave throughout the park with trees, gardens and natural materials. A ravine overlook will provide an accessible perch for an immersive nature-based experience.

Our Teams and Partners

The journey to bring The Eli's Park Project to reality has captivated a diverse group of people all working for the same thing – a place where we all belong.

Design Team

Clayton Beaudoin, Patrick Pirtle, Paige Reischl, Shawn Rundell, Vinita Sidhu, Hannah Viano



Teen Advisors

Bethel, Elroe, Kissehanet, Lavancia, Meklit, Natalina, Trenesia

Leadership

Jen Crum, Christina Ellis, Blake Geyen, Hannah Langlie, Chris Matsumoto, Rebecca Partridge, Lara Rose, Steven Screen



This project is made possible by a partnership with Seattle Parks and Recreation, a fiscal sponsorship from Seattle Parks Foundation, Neighborhood Matching Fund money from the Seattle Department of Neighborhoods and of, course, so much generosity and love from our community.

We are working closely with Seattle Children's Hospital, the Ronald McDonald House, residents of the Burke-Gilman Place Apartments, Magnuson Community Center and other community partners to center and amplify voices that are too often unheard.



Eli's Impact

With your support, we can build a place where everyone belongs. Eli's loving spirit created a ripple of hope for more inclusion. He inspired a community to come together and create a space for everyone to feel the kind of love he shared with the world.

You can build a place where:

- we build community
- we learn from each other
- we embrace our similarities
- we celebrate our differences
- we heal with nature
- we find peace, relaxation and belonging

Together, we can build a park that shapes a more inclusive world for everyone.





The Eli's Park Project

To make a donation, volunteer, join our mailing list,
or follow us on Facebook, visit: www.elispark.org