



# APPLICATION INFORMATION

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**PROJECT NAME |**  
CULLITON PARK

**AWARD CATEGORY |**  
TAKING CARE OF WHAT WE HAVE

**PARTICIPANT NAMES AND ORGANIZATIONS |**

- The City of Lancaster – Travis Good and Matthew Metzler  
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- Windward Lighting Studio – Ben Basom  
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## PROJECT DESCRIPTION

With its open space amenities, creative stormwater management, and ecologically supportive plantings, Culliton Park (formerly Farnum Park) now serves as a replicable model of environmentally sensitive design within an existing urban, recreational context. Located in Lancaster City's Southwest Neighborhood, this 3.75-acre park exists over an historic stream that was once sequestered within a 16' culvert. Its new stormwater facilities reduce nutrient and sewage overflows into the Chesapeake Bay watershed, while recreational facilities and access from surrounding neighborhoods are substantially improved following a 2020 renovation. Culliton Park exemplifies the planning principles of LCPC's *'Taking Care of What We Have'* award category.

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## NARRATIVE

Providing those living within surrounding neighborhoods with safe, outdoor recreation opportunities during the ongoing pandemic, Culliton Park demonstrates many of LCPC's identified Planning Leadership Principles – each of which is noted below in bold text, along with applicable *'Taking Care of What We Have'* award category criteria. This renovated park's intensive public use is a clear testament to the first Leadership Principle, **effectiveness**. New recreational amenities include an expanded children's play area, basketball courts, a ballfield, a hillside amphitheater/sledding area, parking with sub-surface stormwater management, public art, and a large central green for less structured activities. Each park area is now illuminated and connected to adjoining spaces via a circuitous and accessible pathway network. Colorful plantings provide a seasonal succession of landscape interest while assisting with water quality and pollinator initiatives.

All plantings, including the new ballfield's specified seed mix, have low fertilizer requirements. Reduced fertilizer applications result in reduced waterway pollution and demonstrate the *'Taking Care of What We Have'* criteria pertaining to **regional stormwater management** strategies, **restoration of natural systems**, and **clean water supply initiatives**. Culliton Park includes a variety of green infrastructure technologies that replicate and restore the natural hydrologic cycle. In doing so, it contributes to regional stormwater efforts by capturing, filtering, and reducing stormwater runoff, thus reducing stormwater discharges into the Conestoga River. Lower discharge volumes correlate with reduced combined sewer overflows. By utilizing green infrastructure, stormwater runoff is instead captured and treated onsite - increasing water quality and allowing for groundwater recharge and evapotranspiration. Approximately 1.37 million gallons of stormwater runoff are now annually managed via a new bio-infiltration basin, underground stone infiltration bed, constructed filter, and rain gardens. All contribute to a more sustainable clean water supply.

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## NARRATIVE CONT.

Freeing the underground stream from its historic and somewhat fragile brick culvert would have resulted in a dearth of available space for all park amenities needed and desired by city residents. Demonstrating the second Leadership Principle, the design team relied upon **innovation** to plan for new and restored park amenities now carefully located over this culvert. For example, each play structure and light pole footing was designed to avoid conflict with the subsurface system. This resulted in a unique layering of recreational and stormwater infrastructure within the same limited site area.

Further demonstrating *'Taking Care of What We Have'* criteria pertaining to **maintenance and improvement to community infrastructure**, 40 native trees, 100 indigenous shrubs, and 11,000 native herbaceous plants were installed throughout Culliton Park. Badly deteriorated seating near a previously soggy ballfield is just one example of the many improvements to this urban park's heavily used infrastructure.

Demonstrating the **use of Best Practices** principle along with LCPC's *'Taking Care of What We Have'* criteria for **existing building reuse**, Culliton Park's design repurposes a former concession building to provide additional public restroom facilities. It also carefully integrates new recreational amenities with the preservation of mature trees and existing stone walls. The latter are remnants of industrial buildings once located near this park's perimeter that have now been restored and illuminated with soft lighting for improved nighttime security, aesthetics, and compliance with Dark Skies best practices. Balancing public safety and light pollution concerns, light dimming features and motion detectors automatically lower illumination levels when the park is not in active use.

With its innovative lighting solutions, its thoughtful approach to stormwater management, and its ecologically supportive plantings, Culliton Park has **replicability** at other public spaces located throughout Lancaster County. In addition to new tree plantings, this open space now hosts extensive areas of perennials, grasses, groundcovers, and shrubs that are primarily native to the mid-Atlantic region. These plants enhance year-round aesthetics for community benefit, reduce stormwater runoff, and provide much needed habitat for native insects and birds. This more sustainable planting design approach is intentionally resilient to climate change due to its inherent diversity and arrangement. Use of planting matrices allows for selected species to find their ideal landscape niches, and to gradually shift from their original locations without disrupting the overall park aesthetic and design intent.

Culliton Park's **partnerships and collaborations** include significant resource investments by the City of Lancaster, the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation & Natural Resources, and the Culliton family. The Lancaster Safety Coalition provided critical design input and new security cameras. New York artist, Matthew Geller, designed customized play area fencing and some site furnishings. These and other park features were then produced by local fabricators and contractors – demonstrating the *'Taking Care of What We Have'* criteria for **promotion of local businesses** to strengthen the "maker economy."

## NARRATIVE CONT.

**Effective communication** and **civic engagement**, two additional Planning Leadership Principles, were perhaps best demonstrated during a 2017 onsite neighborhood meeting with representatives from Water Street Mission, Carter McCrae Elementary School, and others living in areas surrounding Culliton Park. Prior to this meeting, there was much blaming of others for problems that had plagued this public space for decades. At this meeting, neighbors and institutional leaders became engaged in collaborative efforts to solve these challenges. Communication then continued as the Mayor's Office of Neighborhood Engagement sought community input on Culliton Park's conceptual design during a pre-pandemic Open Streets event. Neighborhood children selected their preferred play equipment features, and SoWe provided community updates during the park's reconstruction period.

From Culliton Park's intentional intersection of effective design and ecological objectives sprung many opportunities for environmental education and **advocacy**. Signs posted in Culliton Park convey messages pertaining to its native plant communities and water resource protection. Since its November 2020 reopening, this park has served as an outdoor learning destination for the Lancaster County Conservancy, the National Association of State Outdoor Recreation Officers, and many others. Following a successful submission by this project's General Contractor, Flyway Excavating, Culliton Park received the Associated Builders and Contractors 'Excellence in Construction' award for public works infrastructure. In addition to this places2040 Planning Leadership Awards submission, Culliton Park has been recently submitted for consideration by the American Society of Landscape Architects and for the Governor's Award for Environmental Excellence.

Demonstrating LCPC's final Planning Leadership Principle, **consistency with earlier planning**, completed park improvements now reflect efforts initiated 13 years ago. Planning for the public space now known as Culliton Park was initiated during a 2009 city-wide master planning process that resulted in Lancaster's Urban Park, Recreation, and Open Space Plan for this site and 29 other areas located throughout this municipality. Public engagement specifically targeted for Culliton Park then resumed in 2017 when this park's renovation was prioritized by City leaders. Today, Culliton Park reflects this early planning effort while also demonstrating leadership and effectiveness in implementing LCPC's places2040.

Two remaining '*Taking Care of What We Have*' criteria include **interconnected open space** and **stewardship of our heritage**. Connecting Culliton Park to surrounding areas, the City of Lancaster's proposed 1.5-mile Water Street Bike Boulevard will provide a continuous on-street and off-road route from Harrisburg Avenue to Fairview Avenue for both cyclists and pedestrians. Heritage stewardship includes the preservation of vibrant urban places, and the newly renovated Culliton Park is now poised to provide such urban vibrancy for many years to come.





2. In 2000, Lancaster City replaced a section of the 16'-wide, 19th-century brick culvert carrying a former stream and sewage flows through Culliton Park's eastern section. Prior to its 20th-century conversion to recreational use, this site was dominated by industrial operations.



3. Prior to replacement with amphitheater-style seating, ballfield bleachers were in serious disrepair and provided cover for illegal activities near the edge of Culliton Park's surrounding neighborhood.



4. Public design participation was initiated during 2009 master planning for all 30 Lancaster City open spaces. It resumed in 2017 with a focus on newly prioritized Culliton Park. Diverse neighbors including leaders from a local mission and school shared ideas.



5. The reconstructed park is located two blocks southwest of Lancaster City's heart - the area occupied by this photograph's two tallest structures. Former industrial buildings bordering the park are now repurposed as an elementary school and a mission for homeless citizens.



6. This opposite photo orientation depicts a new play area, basketball courts, and connecting pathways that were carefully constructed over historic subsurface infrastructure. An existing pavilion was expanded nearby, and a former wading pool was reconstructed for safer water play.



7. This pre-reconstruction photo depicts the park's western section – an area that was previously separated from the adjoining neighborhood by a chain-link fence.



8. Following reconstruction, pathways connect the park's western section to the adjoining neighborhood. Stairs are intentionally aligned with an off-site landmark. Per neighbor input, sloped areas remain for use as a sledding hill and amphitheater. All other park entrances are fully accessible.



9. Below the amphitheater and sledding hill, a small stage was constructed. Above, preserved stone foundations of former structures are illuminated for added aesthetics and park security. A more gently sloped central green serves as a flexible space for numerous activities.



10. Public art was added to the façade of an existing pavilion. Signage provides information pertaining to the park's native plant communities and stormwater management strategies which include rain gardens and a large infiltration bed beneath a reconstructed parking area.



11. Within their first season of growth, these native, pollinator-friendly plantings create seasonal colors to complement other park features such as nearby play equipment and public art.



12. This pre-reconstruction photo depicts the former play area with its access challenges and loose surfacing that permitted burial of drug paraphernalia by some former park users.



13. Positioned on safety surface tiles, new play equipment was selected with input from neighborhood children. The play area is safely enclosed by a locally fabricated, customized fence that includes recycled components.



14. A rain garden (left) frames the southern park gateway. Diverse plant matrices are used throughout the park's plantings to provide resilience, habitat, and opportunities for education.