



Town of Fort Smith

Conibear Park Preliminary Design & Landscape Amenities Standards

Public & Stakeholder Engagement No.2

What We Heard Report



Prepared for Town of Fort Smith
by IBI Group

February 2022

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1 Public & Stakeholder Engagement

1.1 Process – What We Did

1.1.1 Public Engagement Plan (PEP)

Public and stakeholder engagement was guided by a Public Engagement Plan prepared with input from the Town of Fort Smith project team.

Following the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) Spectrum of Public Participation, the project team determined the level of engagement would be to Involve – to work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.

The COVID-19 Pandemic continues to impact everyone’s lives, causing public engagement to move to online platforms since March 2020. Over the course of the pandemic, provincial and territorial restrictions allowed in-person engagement to resume temporarily, before shifting back online in response to high case-counts. As such, the public engagement plan was developed with the intent to host stakeholder and public engagement in-person with the ability to shift online as required.

Key stakeholder involvement included internal Town departments, Conibear Park & Amenities Advisory Board, Tourism and Business representatives, the Economic Advisory Board, Indigenous Government representatives, the Elders and Seniors Society, and local artists and musicians. The stakeholder’s role on the public engagement spectrum was the same as the public: Involve but were consulted separately from the public as an opportunity to understand their unique vision for the park.

The Public Engagement Plan (PEP) was prepared and then refined with input from the Town. It included the background and context of the project, engagement strategy, timeline, engagement activities/techniques, reporting and evaluations, participation challenges & opportunities, stakeholder analysis. Following the results of Phase 1 of public engagement, two (2) park concept options were developed along with proposed landscape amenities and signage designs. In February 2022, three (3) online events were conducted with stakeholders to comment and discuss on the conceptual park options and amenities. Also held in February 2022, the public had an opportunity to comment on the same options and amenities through an online survey.

1.1.2 Stakeholder Engagement

Online meetings were held with stakeholder groups in a total of four (3) meetings to offer two (2) conceptual park options and amenity designs related to benches, picnic tables, litter receptacles, and signage. These discussions took place on February 7, 9, and 10 online via Microsoft Teams with the following stakeholder groups:

- Town Mayor and Council
- Project Advisory Committee
- Business and Tourism Representatives
- Economic Development Advisory Board
- Community Services Advisory Boards
- Senior and Elders Group
- Arts and Culture Representatives
- Indigenous Government Representatives

All stakeholders were invited to attend respective online focus group meetings and participate in the online survey.

1.1.3 Public Engagement

The public engagement included a short PDF presentation for public review and an online survey. The presentation included an overview of the project goals and timeline, a review of the revised vision and guiding principles, draft concept plan and proposed amenities, and next steps for the project. An online survey was posted on the Town's project webpage and participants were directed to it to share their feedback. Hard copies of the survey were also available. The online survey was live from February 1 to February 15, 2022. Post cards with the webpage link were handed out in advance.

1.2 Stakeholder Feedback - What We Heard

1.2.1 Project Advisory Committee

The first stakeholder meeting on Feb 7 included members of the Project Advisory Committee, Community Services Board, Smith Landing First Nation, Salt River First Nation, Fort Smith Metis Council. Two different park options were presented, and the group provided the following comments:

- Preference generally for Concept Option #2 with plaza closer to the stage
- Use locally sourced materials (lumber, rocks, etc.), if available
- Consider accessibility throughout the site
- Stage should have a roof
- Lighting throughout the site without impacting dark sky reserve
- Consider options for road closures (McDougal or Portage or both) for events
- Position the stage further back for additional gathering space
- Safety concerns regarding proposed fire pits
- Operation and maintenance of washrooms – operating hours, year-round, winterizing
- Deter motorized vehicle use
- Remove some older trees in TransCanada Trail Park

The meeting also provided design element options for amenities that will be placed throughout the Town and the group provided the following comments:

AMENITY	COMMENTS
Benches	Legs ○ Steel is more appealing than gabion baskets Seat ○ Although more susceptible to vandalism wood topped ○ Tamarack is more appealing and a local material but may not be as available as Glulam
Picnic Tables/Trash Receptacles	○ Receptacles should have lids ○ Implement two stream receptacles ○ Ensure receptacles are durable to vandalism (damage)

	○ Allow for users with wheelchairs with longer concrete pads and tabletops
Main Signage	○ The simple design appealing ○ Tops of pillar should slope or have a metal cap ○ Explore poles with differing (smaller) diameters
Trailhead Signage	○ Option 2 sign orientation resembles a totem pole ○ Consider a combined option: Rectangle on one side and the rapids concept on the other side ○ Work with local artist(s) on final design ○ Interchangeable sign banners

1.2.2 Mayor and Council

The second stakeholder meeting was with the Town Mayor and Council on Feb. 9. Two different park options were presented, and the group provided the following comments:

- Preference for Concept Option #2
- Operation and maintenance of washrooms – is there funding? Operating hours?
- Position the stage further back instead of centred
- Consider fencing at site boundary for safety
- Repurpose existing Camber of Commerce foundation for washrooms
- Deter motorized vehicle use
- Design stage to be acoustically sound for performers and audience members
- Stage needs a roof
- Representation of the conibear trap is necessary. Utilize local welders to create displays and educational opportunities for tourists
- Current concept takes on a more western look – preference to represent hunting/trapping and the long history of this land and the conibear trap in Fort Smith.
- Safety concerns for the location of fire pit next to trees
- Place water fountains near washrooms
- Designated food truck location during evening
- Tree in TransCanada Trail park to be maintained for use as town Christmas Tree

The meeting also provided design element options for amenities that will be placed throughout the Town and the group provided the following comments:

AMENITY	COMMENTS
Benches	Legs ○ Corten steel does not look appealing ○ Gabion baskets have the potential to be damaged ○ Are there options that do not include a concrete slab

Picnic Tables/Trash Receptacles	○ Ensure the tables can accommodate wheelchairs ○ Only have picnic tables in Conibear park
Main Signage	○ Preference for Option 1 ○ Use the Conibear Trap outline as part of the sign ○ Signs can be locally manufactured
Trailhead Signage	○ Preference for Option 1 ○ Potential for vandalism (spray painting) – can this be prevented or mitigated

1.2.3 Advisory Boards

The third stakeholder meeting was with seven members from the Economic Development Advisory Board and Sustainable Development Advisory Board on Feb 10. Two different park options were presented, and the group provided the following comments:

- Preference for Option 2 – due to the location of the plaza and walkway
- Consider additional safety measures for crossing McDougal between Conibear Park and TransCanada Trail Park
- Is the parking lot size appropriate? Would a smaller parking lot encourage active transportation?
- Location for local, territorial, and national flag poles
- Integrate the initial design concept for the TransCanada Trail concept - 7 different interpretive stations within the park - each station focused on a different aspect - each indigenous group had a station to tell their story. Look at continuation of the initial concept to be more of an interpretive area for Indigenous stories.
- Gabion baskets as part of the stage
 - Visually appealing
 - Concerns with potential damage/graffiti
 - Are there safety concerns with people climbing the baskets?
- Add vegetative buffer or fencing between park and residential homes to offer sound and visual screening
- Include bike racks
- Could the playground be located behind the stage and have TransCanada Trail park to be more of a peaceful passive recreation space
- Use of fire pits should include water servicing nearby

The meeting also provided design element options for amenities that will be placed throughout the Town and the group provided the following comments:

AMENITY	COMMENTS
Benches	○ Has the use of reclaimed material be considered? ○ Preferences for Gabion & Corten Steel options ○ All amenities should have a consistent look. ○ Gentle curved design of benches is visually appealing

	Legs ○ Gabion baskets align with stage concept ○ Corten steel would match the signage Seat ○ Can different size benches be offered? ○ Tamarack would be preferred but size may not be readily available to be milled ○ Glulam is a preferred alternate
Picnic Tables/Trash Receptacles	○ Ensure receptacles are wildlife proof ○ Picnic tables should accommodate universal accessibility ○ Allow for users with wheelchairs with longer concrete pads and tabletops ○ Increase concrete base to allow for reliability of site use by preventing erosion and mud formation around picnic sites ○ Laminate wraps with imagery around receptable
Main Signage	○ Preference for Option 1 ○ Can signs accommodate the visually impaired
Trailhead Signage	○ Positive reception to the rapid themes ○ Split preference for options ○ Is tamarack of this size able to be locally sourced
Additional Amenities	○ Stylized bike rack (resembling outline of local imagery)

1.2.4 Online Survey

The online survey was available on the Town's project webpage from February 1 to February 15, 2022.

33 survey responses were collected online and 3 hard-copy surveys. 93% of respondents were residents of Fort Smith representing a range of age groups: 26-35 (20%), 46-55 (20%), 56-65 (25%), and 66+ (20%).

This following summarizes what we heard:

Conibear Park Concept Design

- 70% of respondents support the proposed preliminary design concept for Conibear Park
- Comments regarding possible changes to the preliminary design include:
 - No (open) fire pits
 - Locate fire pits only in TransCanada Trail Park
 - Decrease the proposed size of the parking lot. There are many parking lots around the downtown that can be used for events
 - Incorporate a splash pad
 - Bike racks that are secure to the ground
 - Location of playground is safety concern with children crossing the street unsupervised

- Keep TransCanada Trail park natural
- Move playground to Conibear Park to alleviate pedestrian crossing concerns

Amenities

- There is a 50/50 split between preferred main signage design
- For trailhead signage, 46% preferred the Rapids Theme (version 1), 46% preferred the Rapids Theme (version 2), 8% preferred the Other themes (arts canvas) design
- 15 respondents provided preference for bench design; 30% preferred Bench Style 1 (Gabion), 50% preferred Bench Style 2 (Steel Pedestal), 20% preferred Bench Style 3 (Corten Steel)
- 9 respondents provided comments regarding the proposed litter receptacle. The major theme of the comments related to the design needing to be wildlife proof.
- 4 respondents provided comments regarding the proposed picnic benches including:
 - Accommodate wheelchair bound user
 - Integrity of curved wood to split and distort in Fort Smith climate
- Additional comments received regarding Conibear Park preliminary concept design, signage and landscape amenities include:
 - Group picnic tables for larger groups to use
 - More trees for shade
 - Park design could be better suited for a different location in the Town of Fort Smith
 - Consider operating hours and maintenance of washrooms
 - Include a building with tourist info that can function as a performer's storage space, event headquarters, meeting area, and focal point
 - Move playground to Conibear Park
 - Litter receptacle needs to be wildlife proof

1.3 Feedback Summary

The following statements serve as a summary of common feedback from the first phase of engagement:

- Overall preference for Concept Plan Option #2
- Consideration for accessibility is a high priority
- Safety is also a high priority with regards to use of fire pits in design, and pedestrian access between Conibear Park and TransCanada Trail Park
- TransCanada Trail Park to be maintained for more passive recreational uses and playground relocated to Conibear Park
- Use of locally sourced materials is preferred however, concerns for materials sourcing
- Themes of the Conibear Trap should be more present throughout park and amenities design
- Gabion basket and Corten steel are the preferred bench options
- Litter receptacles must be wildlife proof
- Main signage preference for option 1
- Trailhead signage preference for rapids theme option 1

1.4 Public Engagement - Next Steps

The project team will prepare a preferred preliminary design for the park and amenities based on the feedback from this stakeholder and public engagement. Once approved, signage and landscape amenities detail design will be produced, and a final Conibear Park preliminary design will be completed.

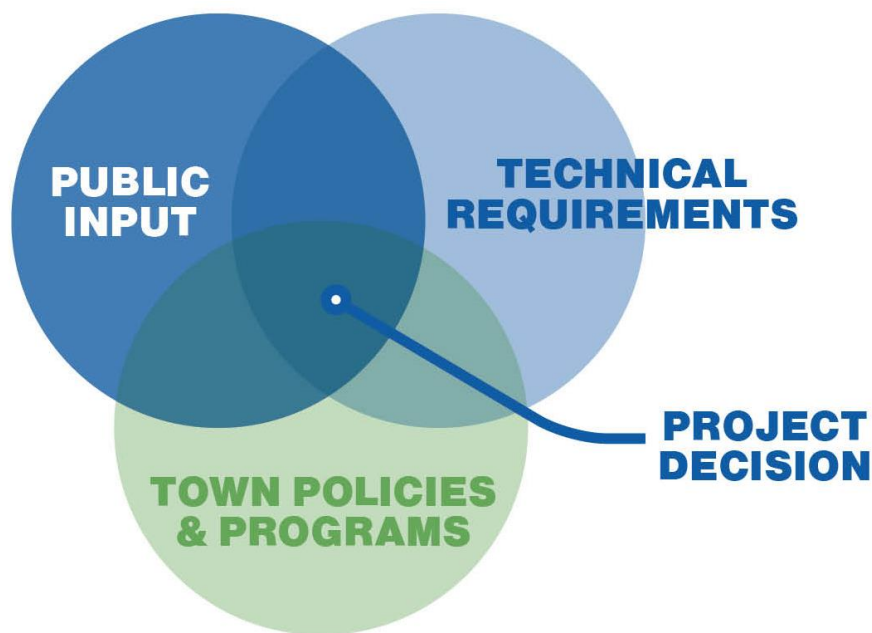


Diagram: inputs influencing the project decision-making process

Appendix A – Community Engagement Data

Public Engagement Presentation
Online Survey



Conibear Park Preliminary Design & Landscape Amenities Standards

Phase 2 Public Engagement

JANUARY 2022



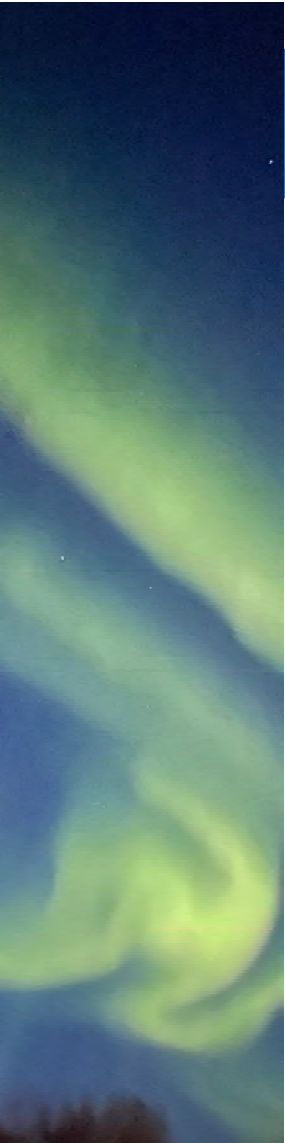
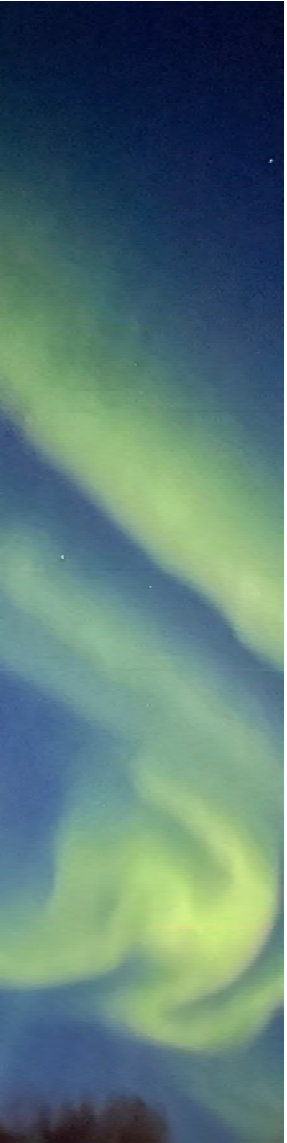


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- 2** Vision & Guiding Principles
- 3** Draft Concept Plan
- 4** Proposed Amenities
- 5** Next Steps



INTRODUCTION



The Town of Fort Smith acknowledges that the land where we work, live, and play is the traditional territory of the Indigenous Peoples of the Salt River First Nation, Smith's Landing First Nation, and the Northwest Territory Metis Nation from time immemorial.

1

Project Team



Cynthia White, Senior Administration Officer
Diane Seals, Economic Development Officer



Luc Deniger, Senior Landscape Architect

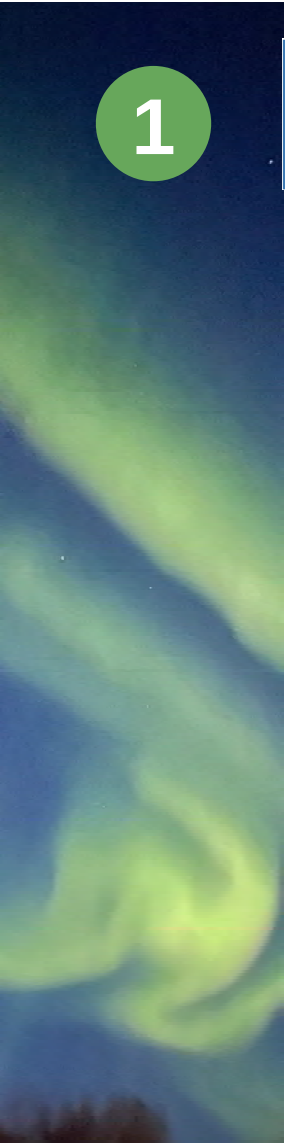
1

Project Timeline



Indicates community engagement moments





1

Project Overview & Goals

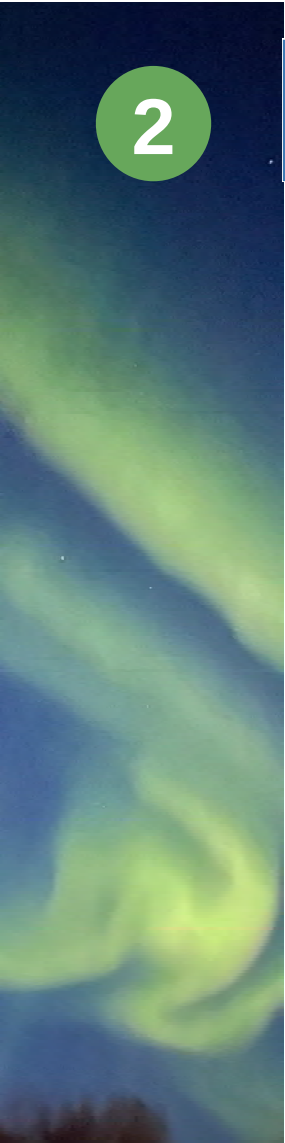
Conibear Park has a rich legacy and is an important part of the Town of Fort Smith's history. The *Conibear Park Preliminary Design and Landscape Amenities Standards* project will provide the Town of Fort Smith with amenities and public spaces that reflect the Town's history, heritage, culture and diversity while providing a theme and language that reflect these and the Town's values.

The GOALS for this project are:

1. To provide standardized designs and details for landscape elements and amenities, such as signage and furniture to be used throughout the town which reflect the uniqueness of Fort Smith and the area.
2. To provide a conceptual and preliminary design for the enhancement of Conibear Park based on community and stakeholder input and vision.



VISION & GUIDING PRINCIPLES

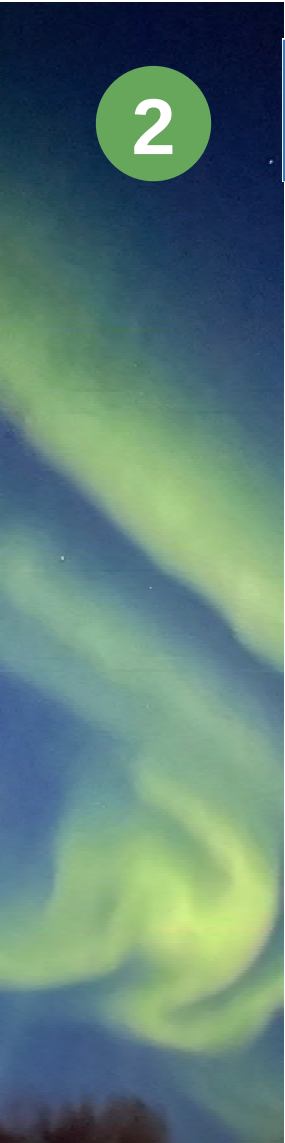


2

Vision

Based on feedback received from the first public engagement event, we heard that Conibear Park is seen predominantly as a hub for community events. The vision has been revised as follows:

“Conibear Park is a significant gathering space that represents the strength of community, honours the culture and history of Fort Smith, and is accessible by all.”



2

Guiding Principles

The feedback from the first public engagement event ranked the guiding principles for the Conibear Park preliminary design, from highest to lowest priority as follows:

1. **Amenities/Recreation** – *enhance park infrastructure and amenities to support recreational, cultural and performance activities, including opportunities for all people, while protecting and enhancing the natural qualities of the park.*
2. **Safety/Accessibility** – *make the park a safe and accessible public space for all users.*
3. **Environment** – *protect and enhance the environmental qualities of the park including natural plantings and landscape.*
4. **Heritage/Culture** – *recognize, celebrate, and incorporate the heritage of the park including Indigenous and post settlement history.*
5. **Character/Identity** – *create and maintain a distinct identity for the park.*



Conibear Park

Concept and preliminary plans

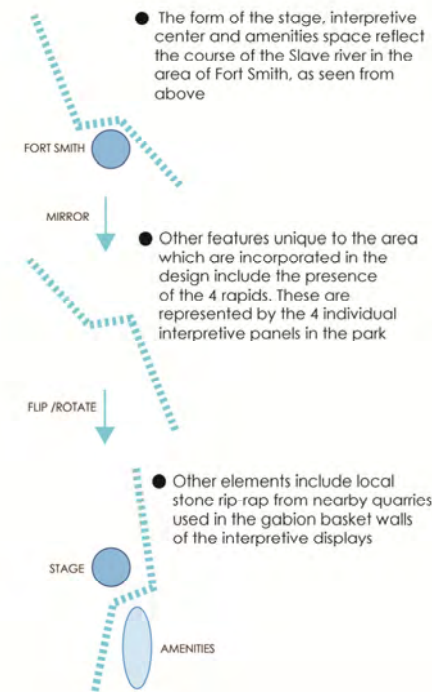
3

Draft Concept Plan

The preliminary plan of Conibear Park is based on the feedback obtained during the first round of consultations and the vision statement.

The conceptual design of Conibear Park and landscape elements were inspired by the presence of the Slave River and its influence and role in the community of Fort Smith.

The course of the river, its banks, and the rapids were instrumental in the design.



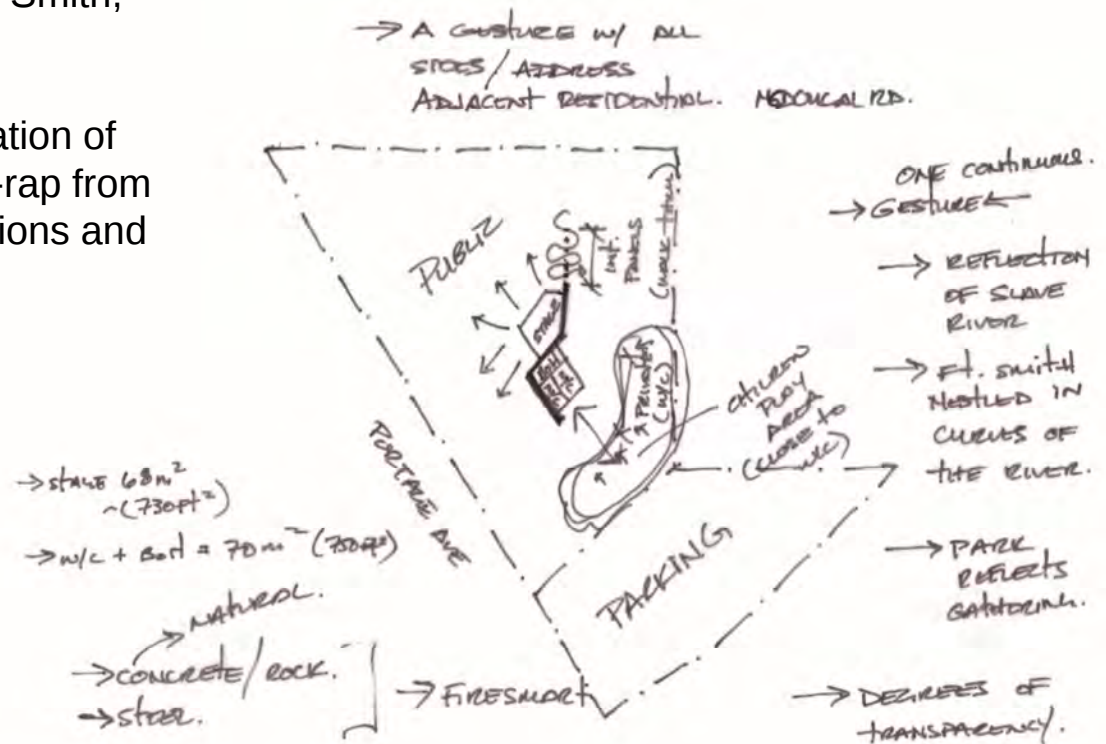
3

Draft Concept Plan

The form and character of the **stage and interpretive center** are a stylized reflection of the course of the Slave river at Fort Smith, seen from above.

The concept also calls for the utilization of **local materials** such as granite rip-rap from the local quarries to be used in gabions and local lumber from Tamarac trees.

A ***gabion*** is a cage filled with materials such as rocks used for creative landscaping features



3

Draft Concept Plan

The plan calls for the park to expand beyond its current boundaries to include the Trans-Canada Trail Park across McDougal Road and include the existing gravel parking lot.

Conibear Park and Trans-Canada Trail Park are linked visually by creating open views between both parks.

An asphalt trail connecting both parks is also proposed to improve the sense of connectivity.

The following slides present TWO draft preliminary plan options for your review.



3

Draft Preliminary Plan – OPTION 1

The image to the right depicts **Option 1** of the preliminary plan.

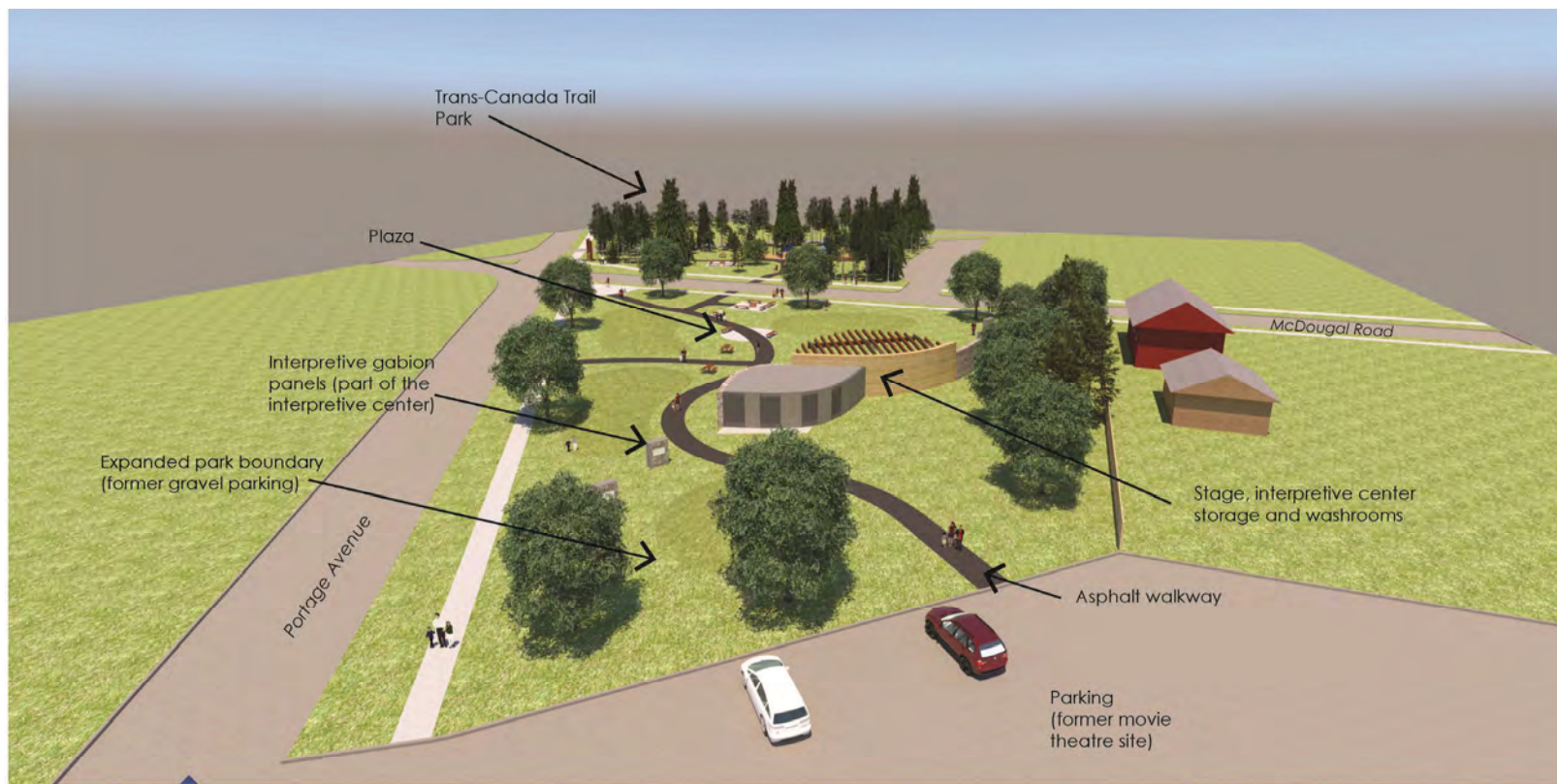
Key Components of this option:

1. Permanent stage, Interpretive Center and washrooms.
2. Social gathering spaces such as fire pits (universal access), seating areas and picnic tables.
3. Open multi-purpose space to be enjoyed year-round.
4. Playground and asphalt pathways.
5. Expanded Conibear Park boundary
6. Re-located and expanded parking lot (previous movie theatre lot).



3

Draft Preliminary Plan – OPTION 1



Conibear Park and TC Trail Park option 1 plaza location

3

Draft Preliminary Plan – OPTION 1



Conibear Park and TC Trail Park option 1 plaza location

3

Draft Preliminary Plan – OPTION 1



Conibear Park - stage & interpretive center

3

Draft Preliminary Plan – OPTION 2

The image to the right depicts **Option 2** of the preliminary plan.

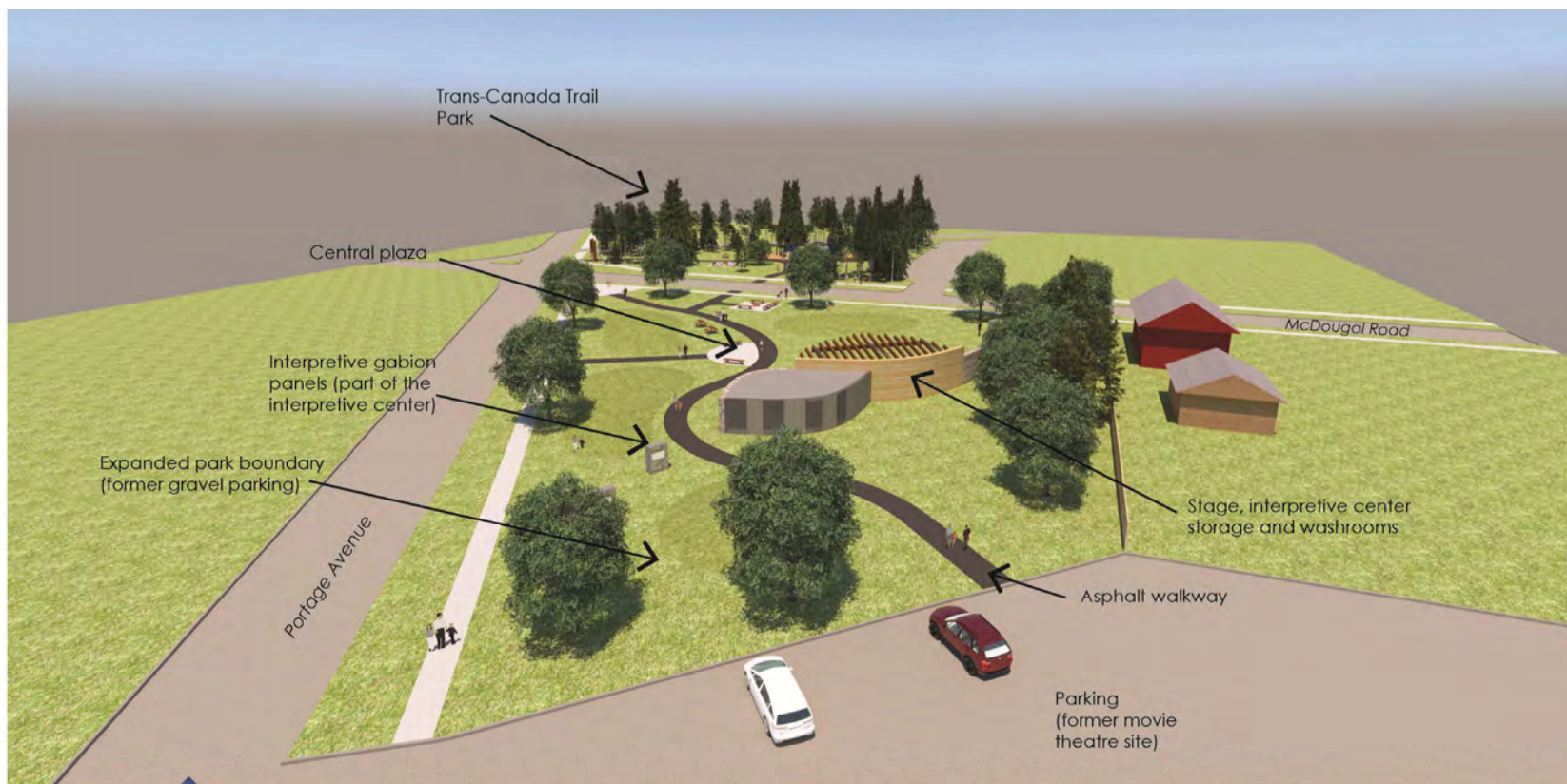
Key Components of this option:

1. Same as in option 1, but with a larger more centralized plaza



3

Draft Preliminary Plan – OPTION 2



Conibear Park and TC Trail Park option 2 central plaza

3

Draft Preliminary Plan – OPTION 2



Conibear Park and TC Trail Park option 2 central plaza

3

Trans-Canada Trail Park

The Trans-Canada Trail Park will have an expanded central area which includes a playground, picnic tables and benches and fire pits.

The intention behind the preliminary design of both parks is to provide a multi purpose central gathering place to be enjoyed year-round.



Trans-Canada Trail Park- playground & amenities

3

Trans-Canada Trail Park



Trans-Canada Trail Park- playground & amenities

3

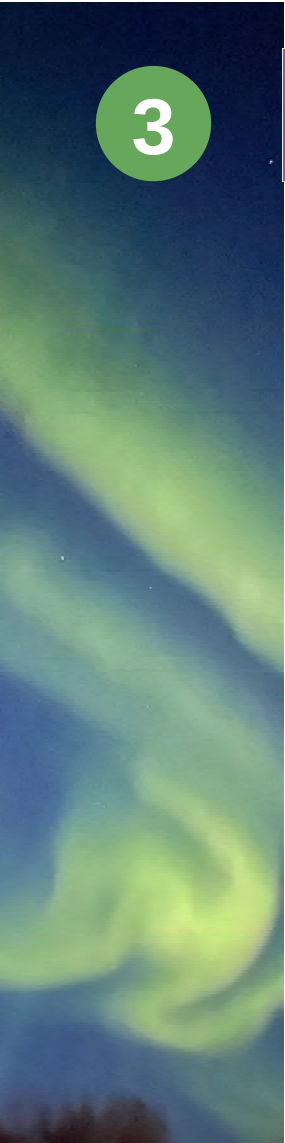
Trans-Canada Trail Park



TC Trail Park & Conibear Park entrances
at Portage Avenue and McDougal Road intersection



PROPOSED AMENITIES



3

Proposed Amenities

The proposed landscape **amenities and signage** also reflect similar themes found in Conibear Park. These also take their inspiration from the Slave River and the history of Fort Smith and area.

Curved benches and picnic tables are a stylized interpretation of the river's flow while other structural elements proposed include gabions with locally quarried riprap and Corten steel pedestals, which are also found in the preliminary designs of Conibear Park and the proposed signage.

There are **three bench options proposed** as illustrated on the following slides.

Proposed Amenities – Bench Materials Options

Option 1 – powder coat

wood slats (Tamarack, Spruce, Fir, Pine)
stained (Sienna stain) or varnished with
marine grade spar varnish (Tamarack only)
Alternative product can include (i.e. "Glulam"
engineered wood products)

Option 2 – gabion

Corten steel frame gabion
with locally quarried rip rap

powder coat metal frame on steel plate
surface mounted and anchored to concrete
base (typical)

powder coat and gabion
benches

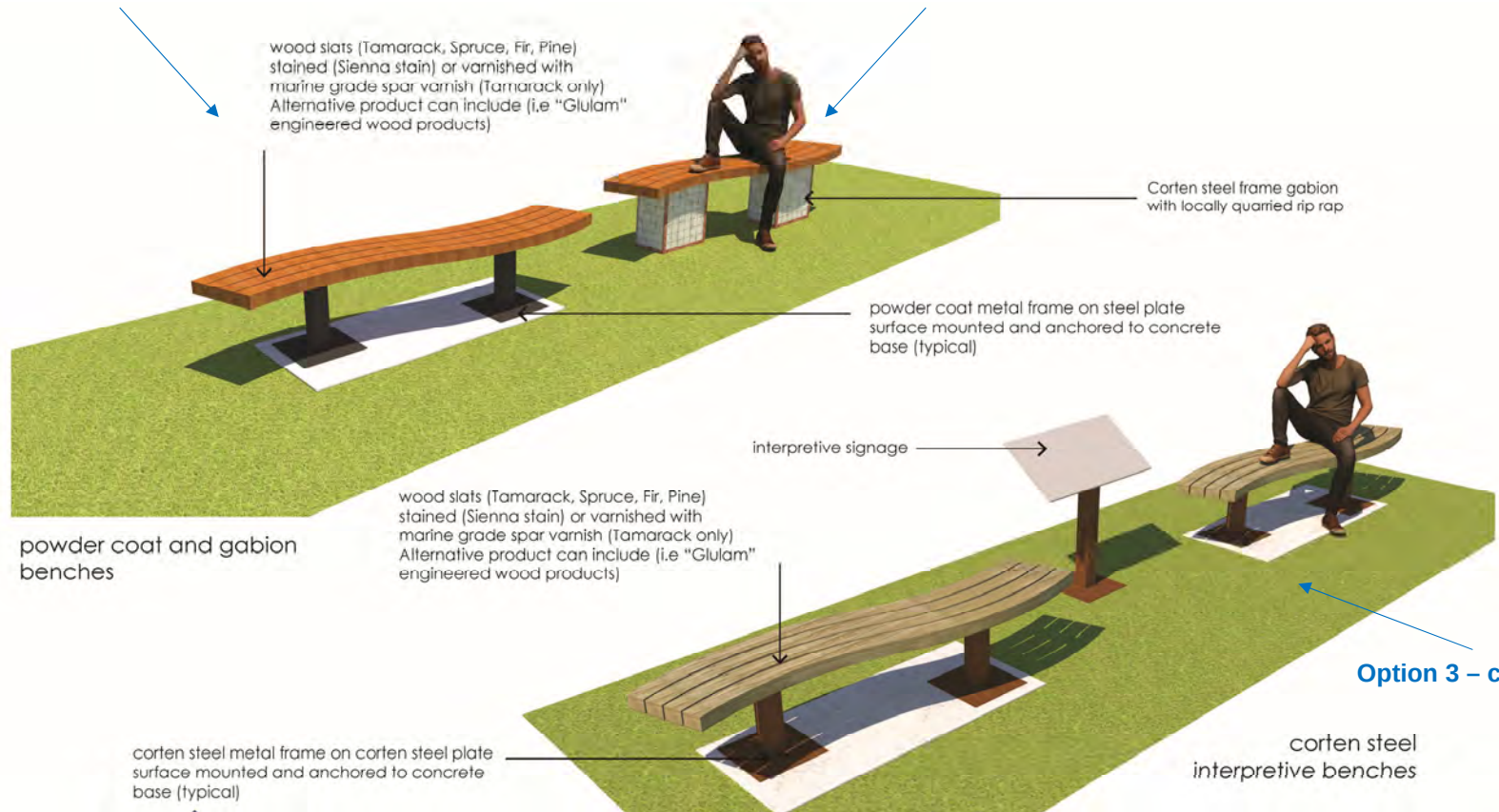
wood slats (Tamarack, Spruce, Fir, Pine)
stained (Sienna stain) or varnished with
marine grade spar varnish (Tamarack only)
Alternative product can include (i.e. "Glulam"
engineered wood products)

interpretive signage

corten steel metal frame on corten steel plate
surface mounted and anchored to concrete
base (typical)

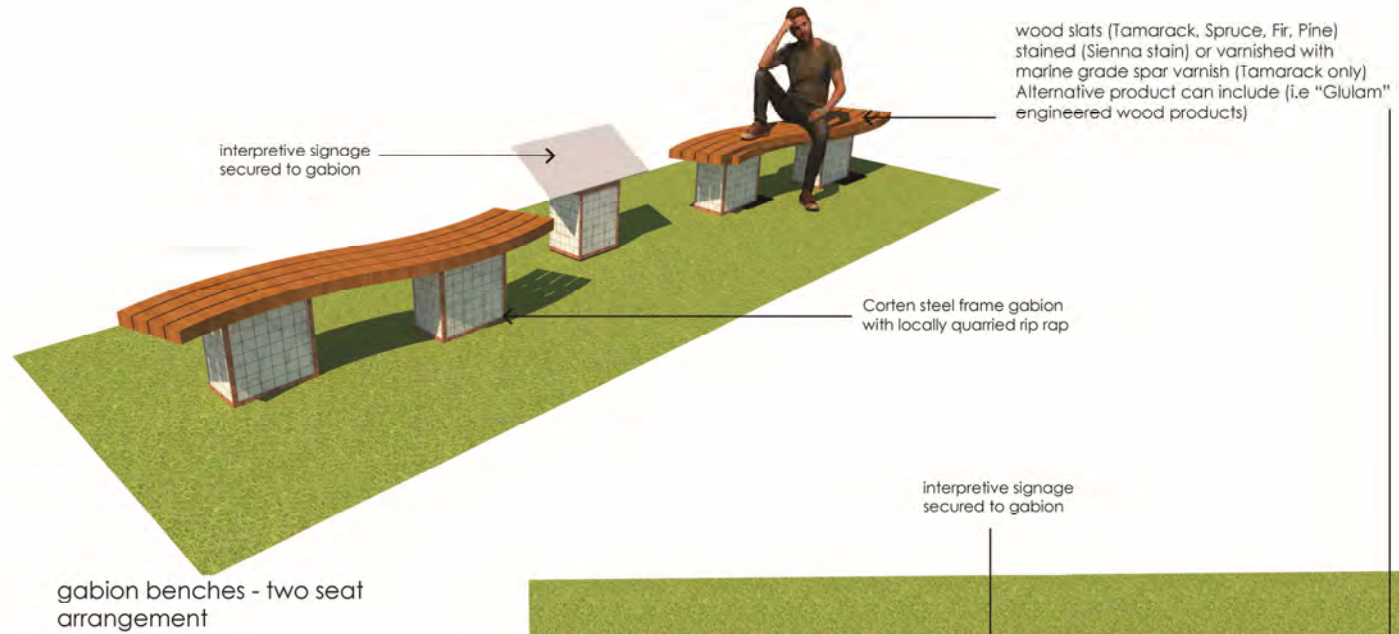
Option 3 – corten steel

corten steel
interpretive benches

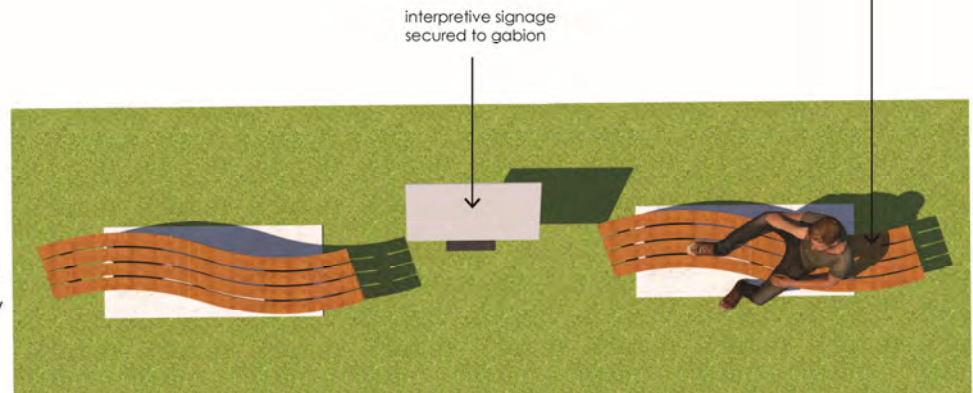


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Proposed Amenities – Gabion Bench

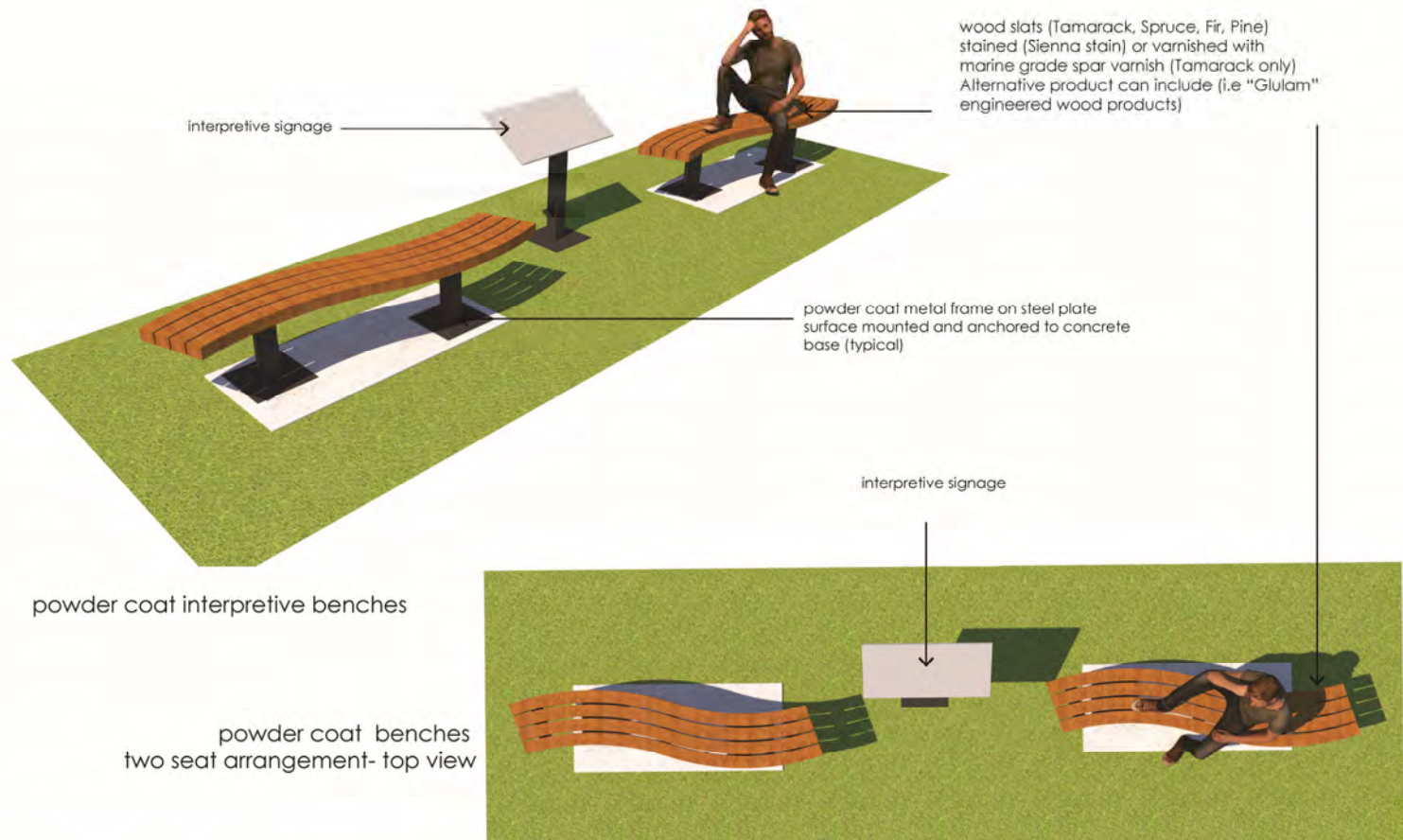


gabion benches
two seat arrangement- top view



3

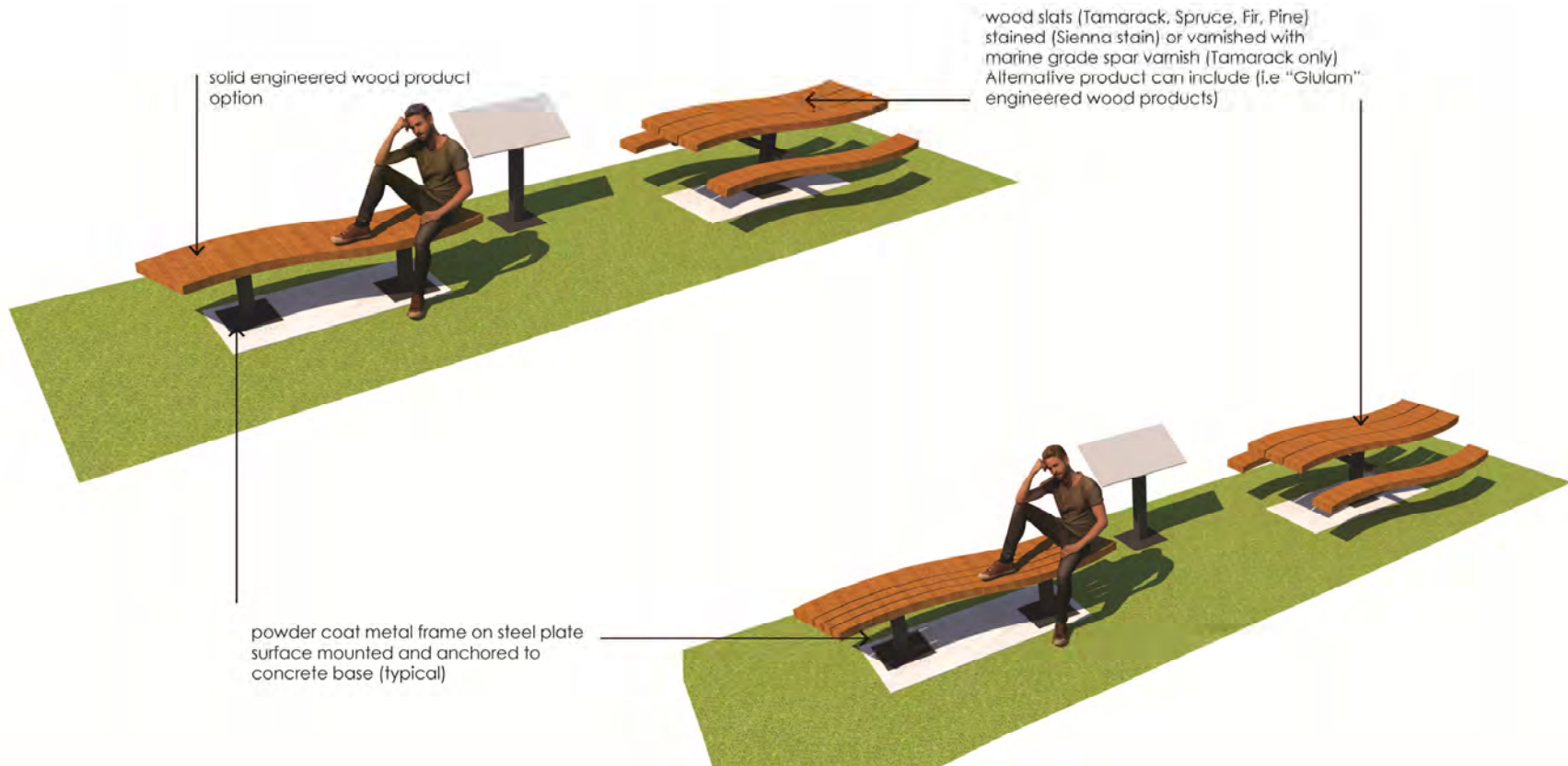
Proposed Amenities – Powder Coat Bench



3

Proposed Amenities – Picnic Table

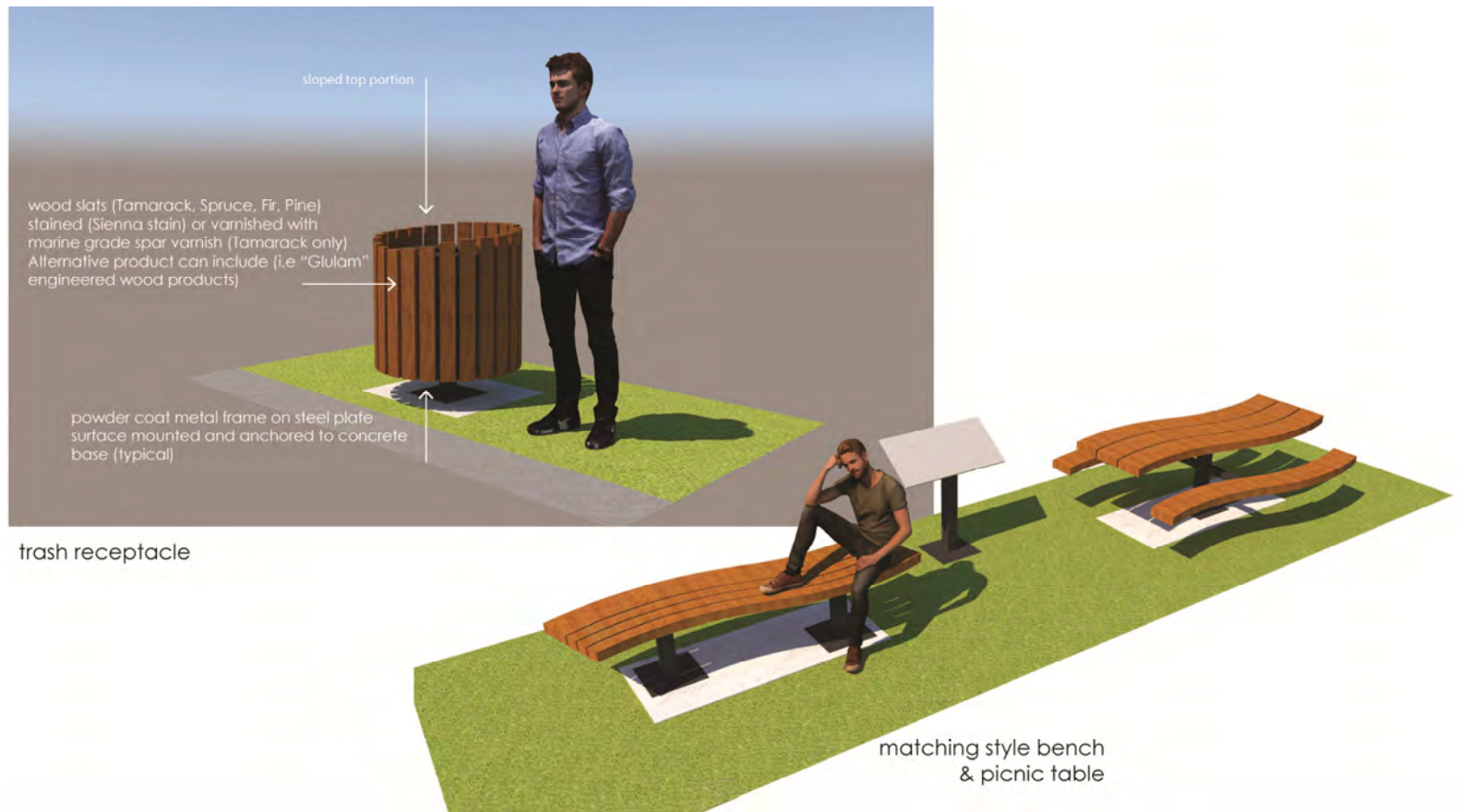
The proposed picnic bench amenity is illustrated below:



3

Proposed Amenities – Litter Receptacle

The proposed litter receptacle amenity is illustrated below:

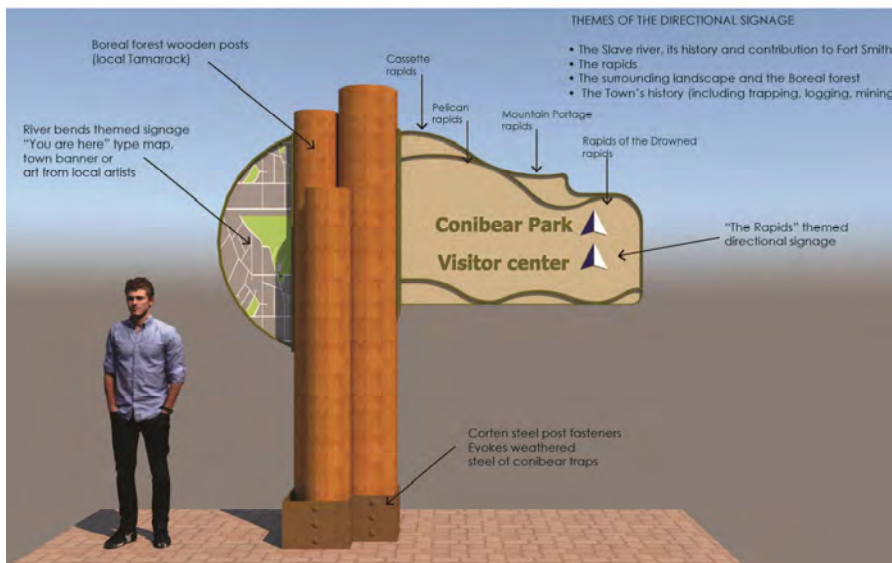


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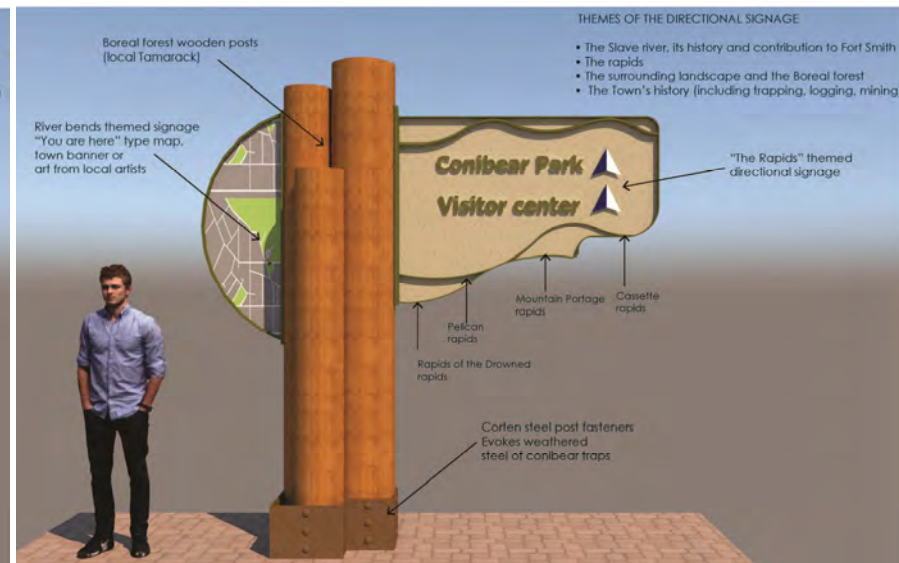
Proposed Amenities – Signage

The shape of the **directional signage** echo's the fluid motion of the river's water and rapids. Posts used in the directional signs are sourced from the local supplies and represent the **trees of the Boreal forest** while the Corten steel plates anchoring the signs remind us of the **weathered steel look of old conibear traps**.

There are **two options** for the main signage being proposed, as shown below and on the following slides.

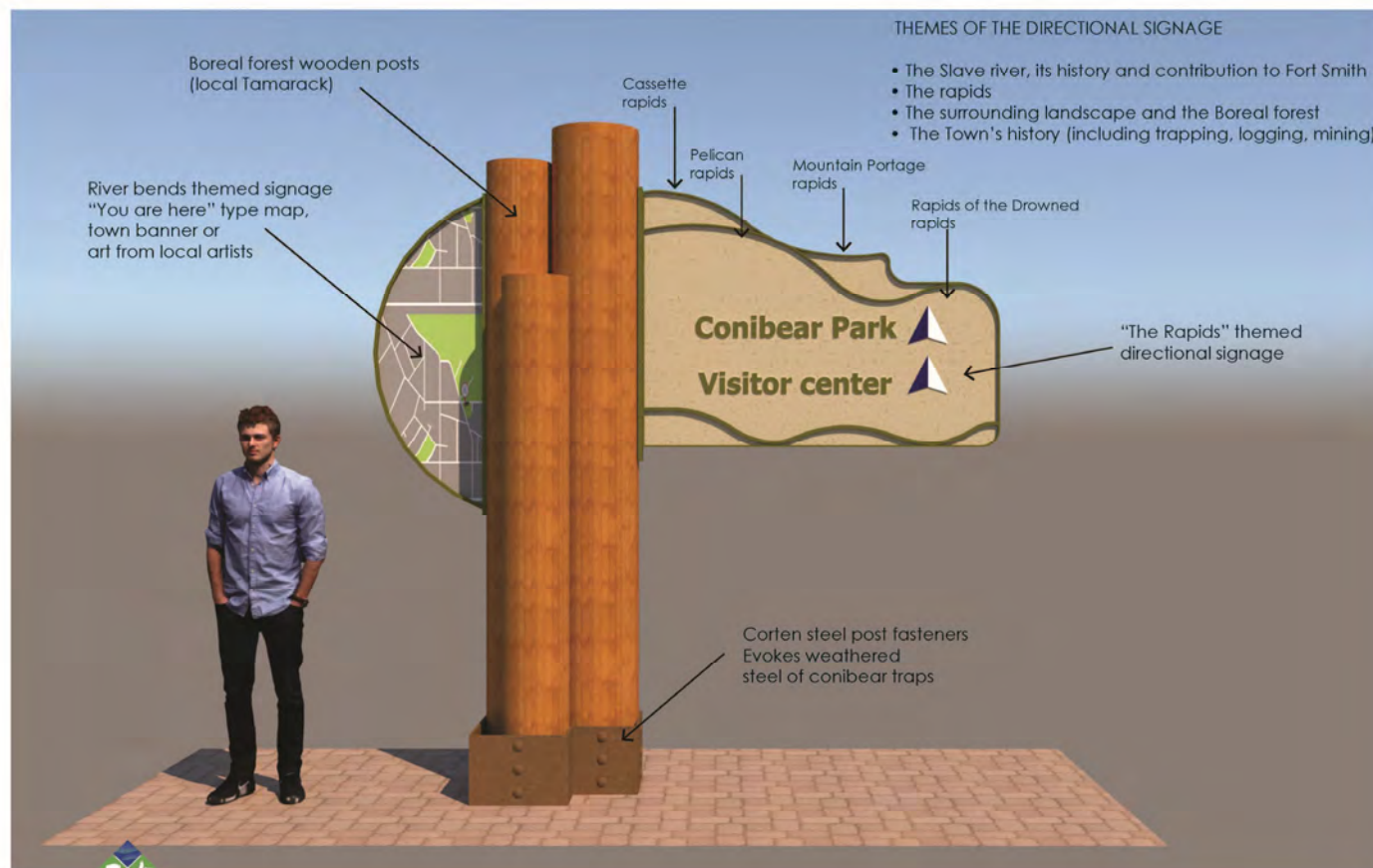


Option 1



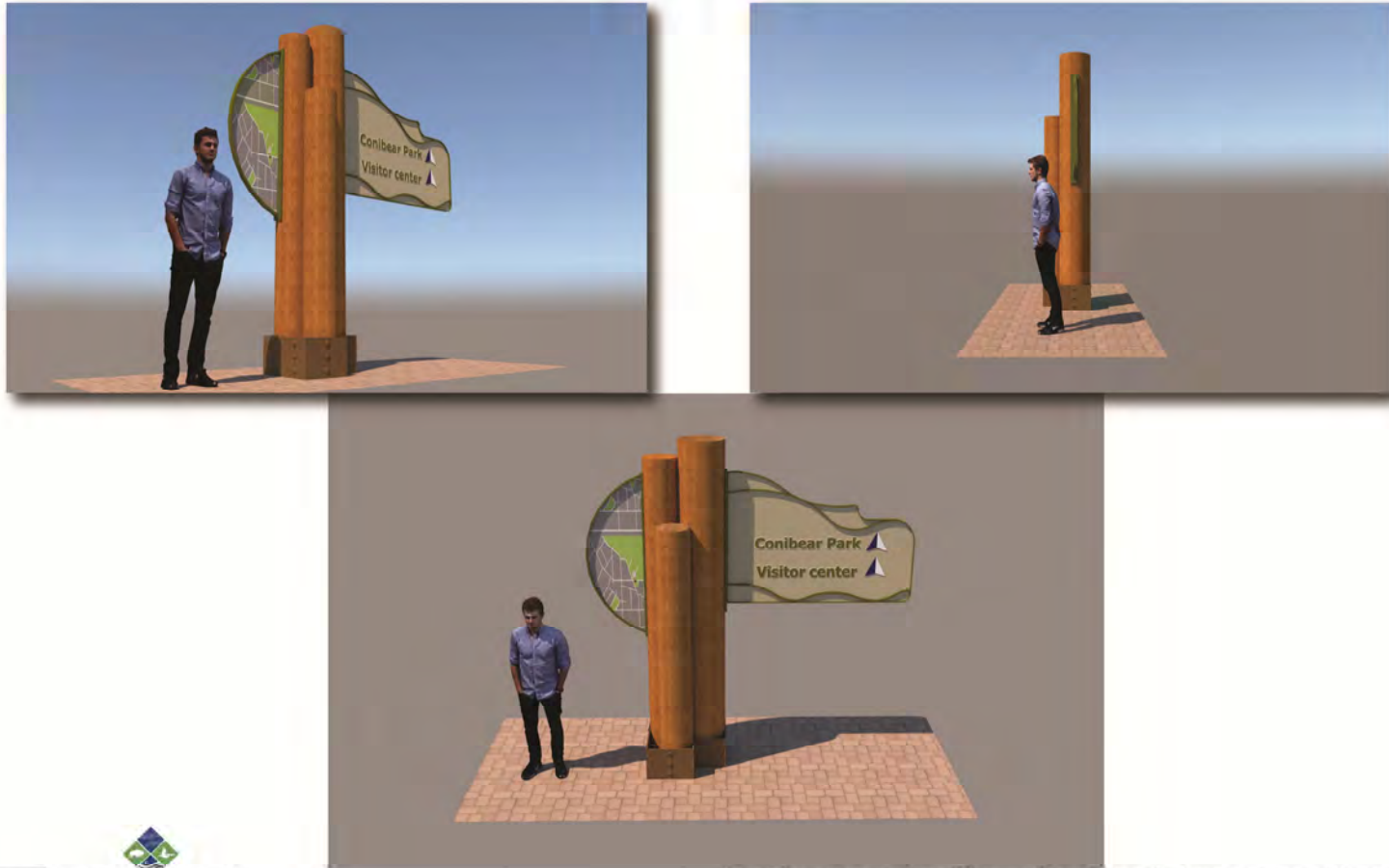
Option 2

Proposed Amenities – Main Signage Option 1



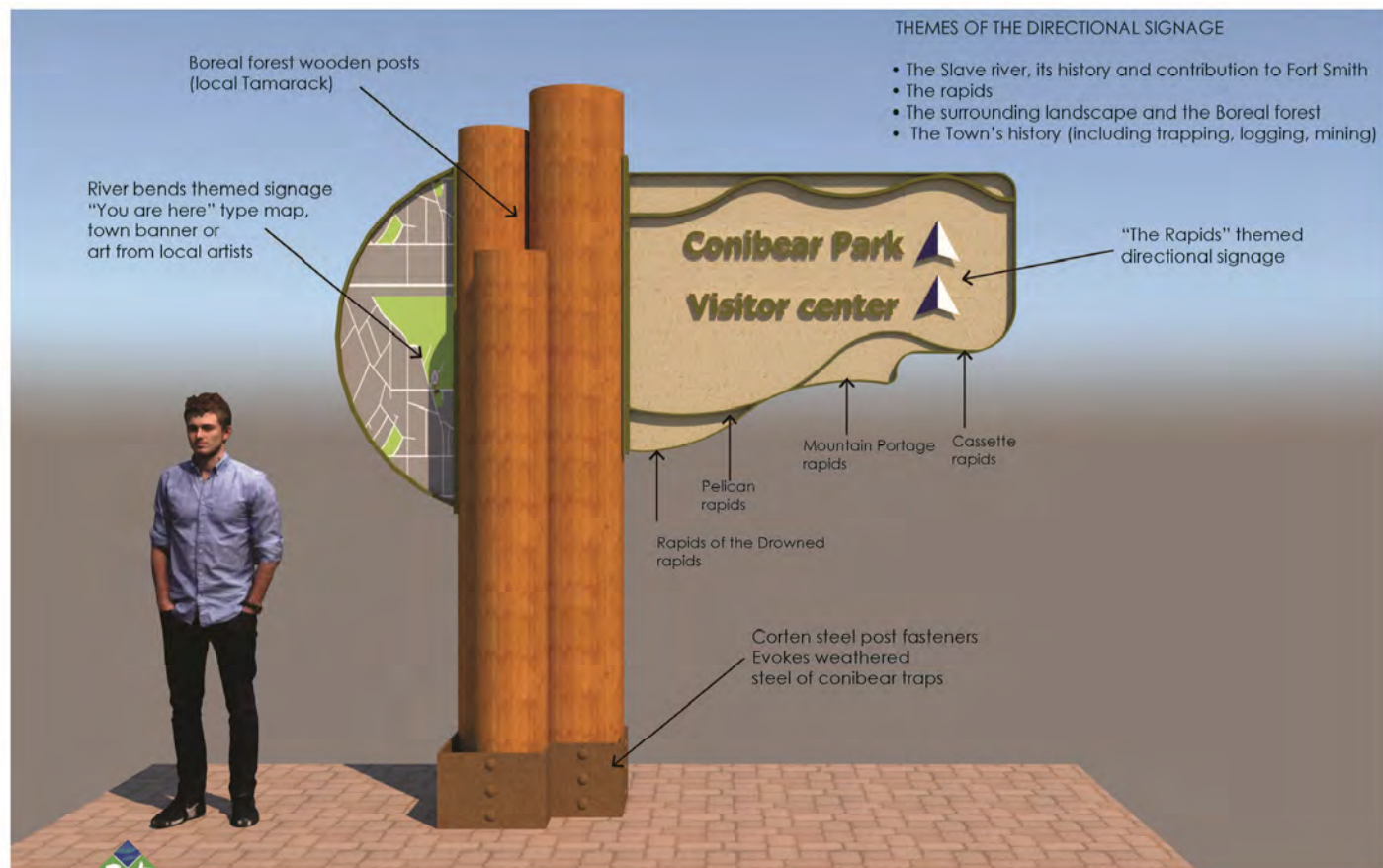
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Proposed Amenities – Main Signage Option 1



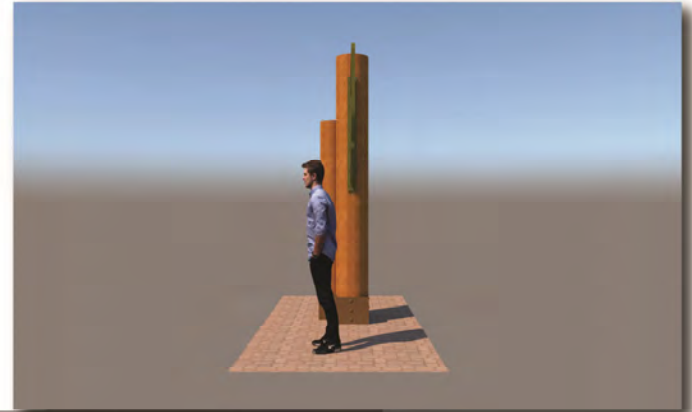
Landscape amenities - directional signage - option 1

Proposed Amenities – Main Signage Option 2



3

Proposed Amenities – Main Signage Option 2

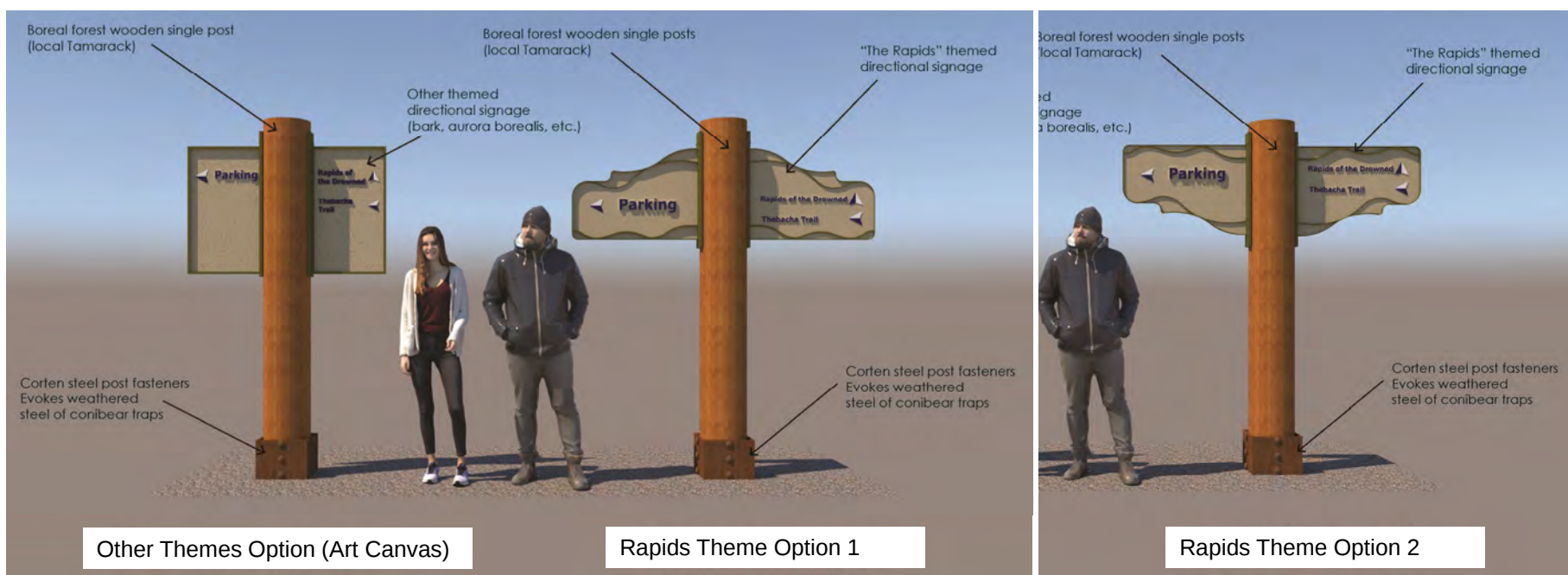


Landscape amenities - directional signage - option 2

3

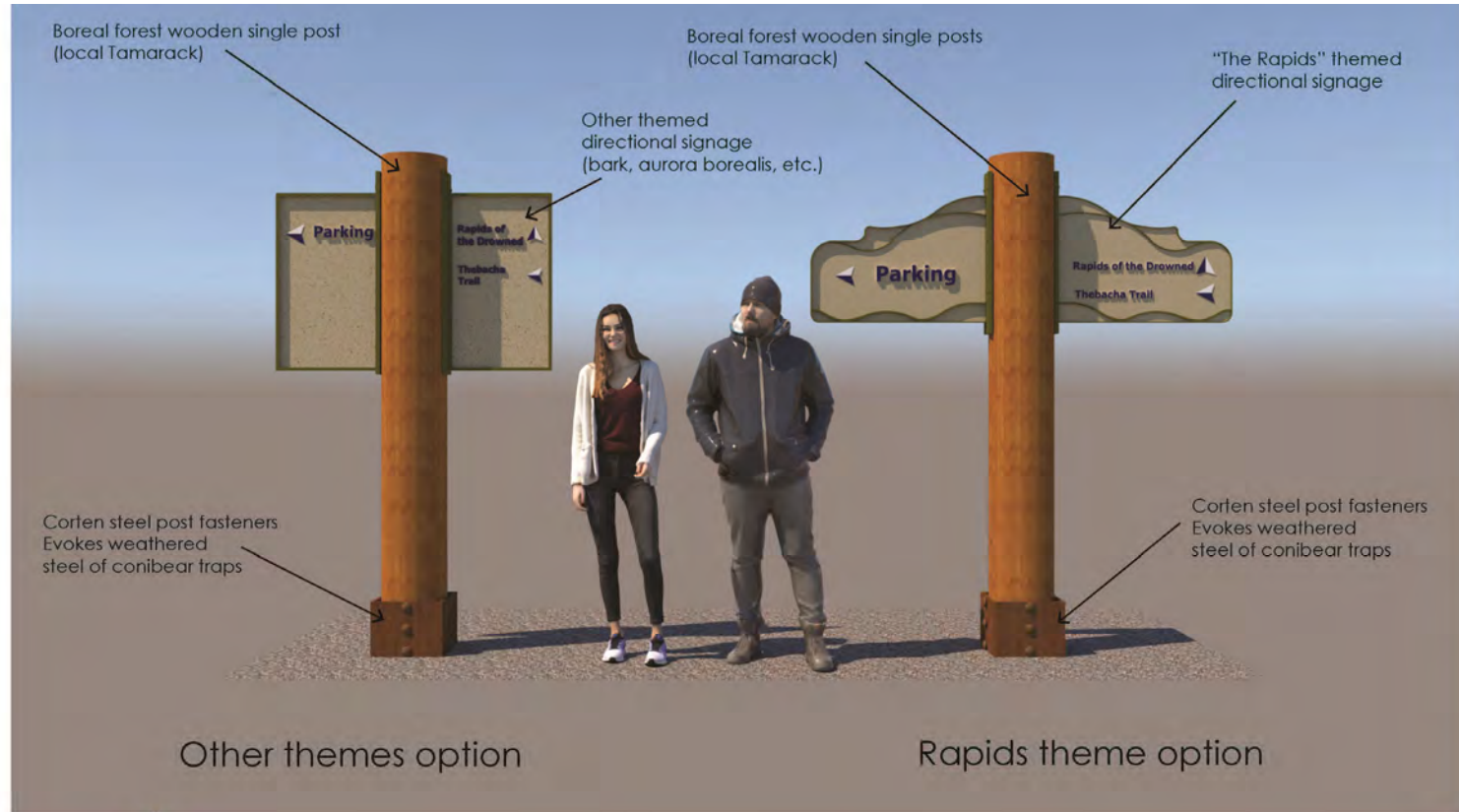
Proposed Amenities – Trailhead Signage

There are **three options** for the trailhead (secondary) signage being proposed, as shown below and on the following slides.



3

Proposed Amenities – Trailhead Signage



Landscape amenities - directional signage - trailhead/secondary signage

3

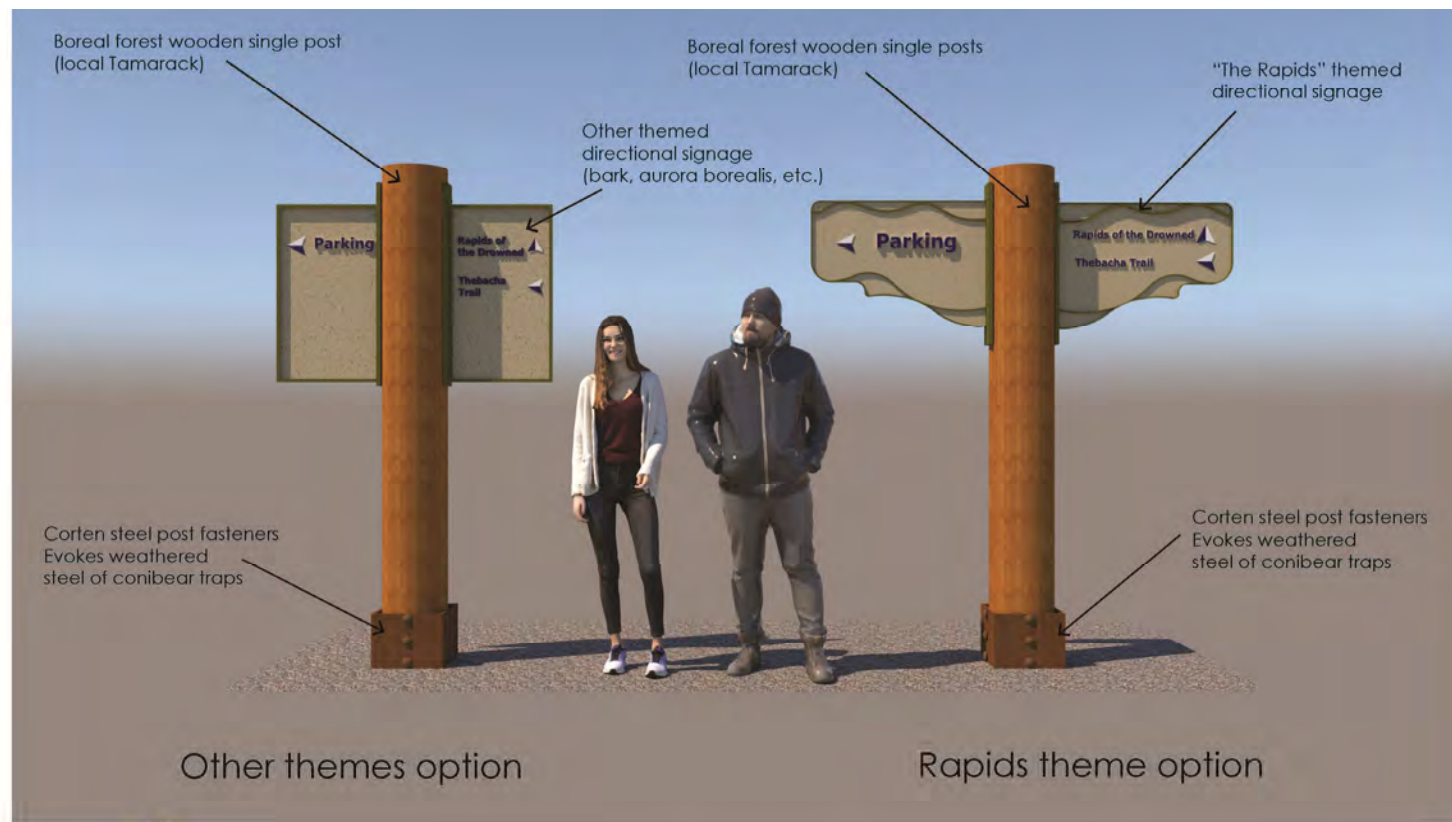
Proposed Amenities – Trailhead Signage



Landscape amenities - directional signage - trailhead/secondary signage

3

Proposed Amenities – Trailhead Signage



Landscape amenities - directional signage - trailhead/secondary signage

3

Proposed Amenities – Trailhead Signage



Landscape amenities - directional signage - trailhead/secondary signage



NEXT STEPS

4

Next Steps

- Feedback gathered will be summarized in a What we Heard Report and will be available on the project web page
- A preferred preliminary design will be prepared based on feedback from the stakeholder and public engagement.





Thank You!

Please proceed to fill out the survey at:

<https://www.research.net/r/ConibearPark>

For additional information please contact

Diane Seals

Economic Development Officer, Town of Fort Smith

Email: dseals@fortsmith.ca



Fort Smith Conibear Park Preliminary Design & Landscape Amenities Standards Survey Questions

Please visit the Conibear Park project website <https://www.fortsmith.ca/conibearpark> to review the presentation and take a few minutes to fill in our survey.

The Town of Fort Smith is working with IBI Group, a landscape design firm, to provide a preliminary contemporary design for Conibear Park and provide Design Standards for directional, interpretive signage and landscape amenities such as benches, picnic tables, etc.

The project is currently in the Preliminary Design phase.



The purpose of this survey is to gather feedback on the preliminary design concept for Conibear Park as well as the proposed signage and landscape amenities. Both were developed with feedback gathered during the first public engagement event in October 2021. Additional information regarding the first public engagement event is available in the What We Heard report on the Conibear Park project web page.

Today, the Town is looking for your feedback on the following items:

1. Proposed signage and landscape amenities and
2. A preliminary design concept for Conibear Park

*Optional questions

1. *Are you a resident of Fort Smith? (Please select one)
 - a. Yes, I am a resident
 - b. No [drop down member of surrounding areas, Metis/First Nations, etc.]
2. *Age of respondent. How old are you?
 - a. Under 18
 - b. 18-25
 - c. 26-35
 - d. 46-55
 - e. 56-65
 - f. 65+

Conibear Park Preliminary Design & Landscape Amenities Standards

The proposed concept for Conibear Park is shown below:

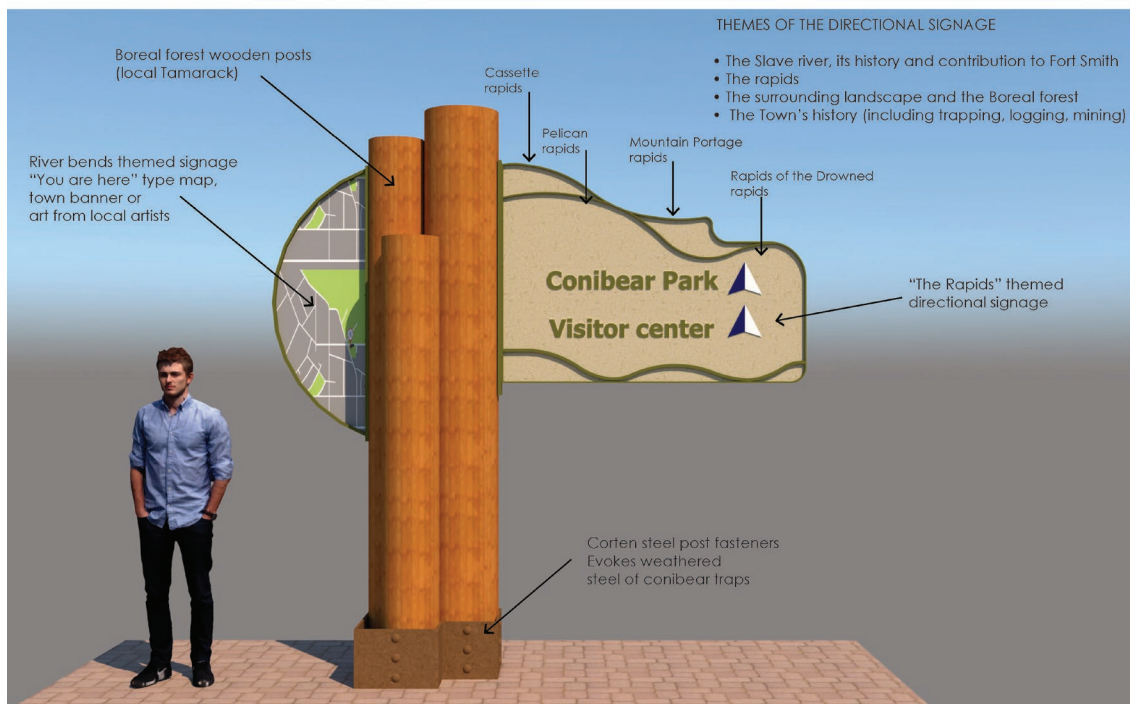


3. Do you support the proposed preliminary design concept for Conibear Park?
 - a. Strongly support
 - b. Support
 - c. Neutral
 - d. Do not support
 - e. Strongly do not support
4. Is there anything you would like to change about the preliminary design concept for Conibear Park? (if no, please leave blank)

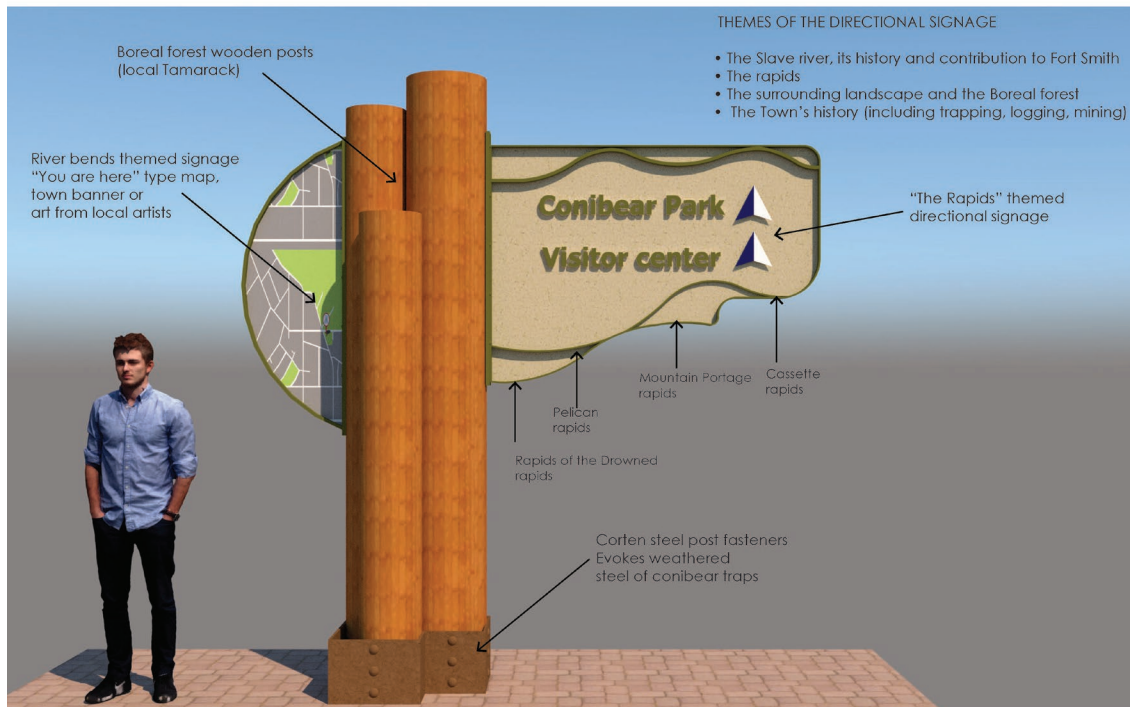
Conibear Park Preliminary Design & Landscape Amenities Standards

5. There are two options for the main signage as shown below. **Please circle your preferred option.**

Option 1:

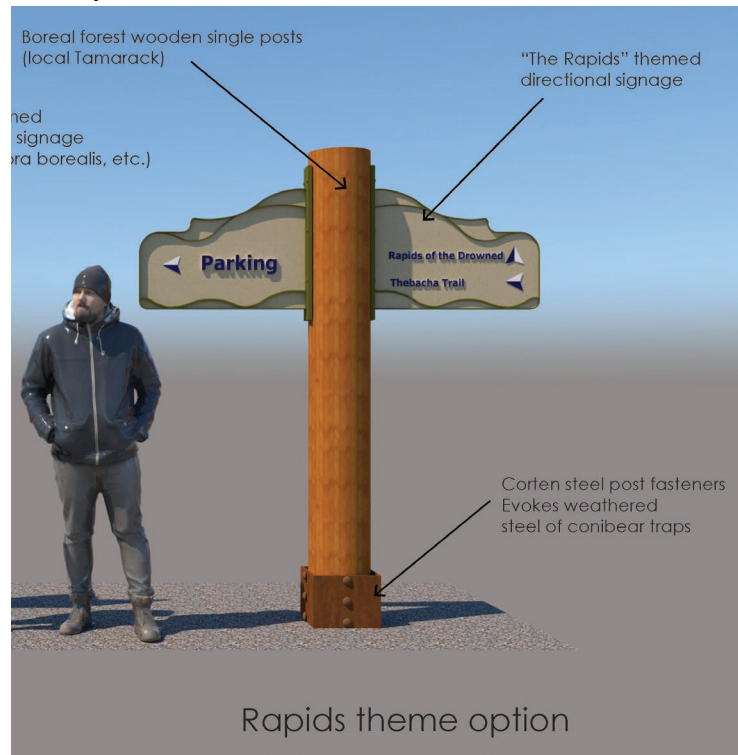


Option 2:

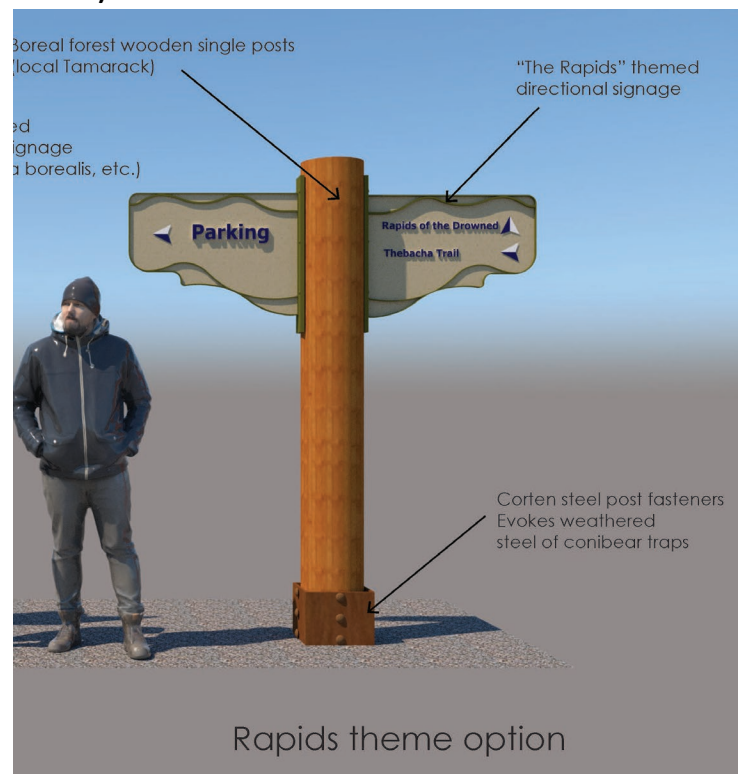


6. There are three options for the trailhead signage as shown below. **Please circle your preferred option.**

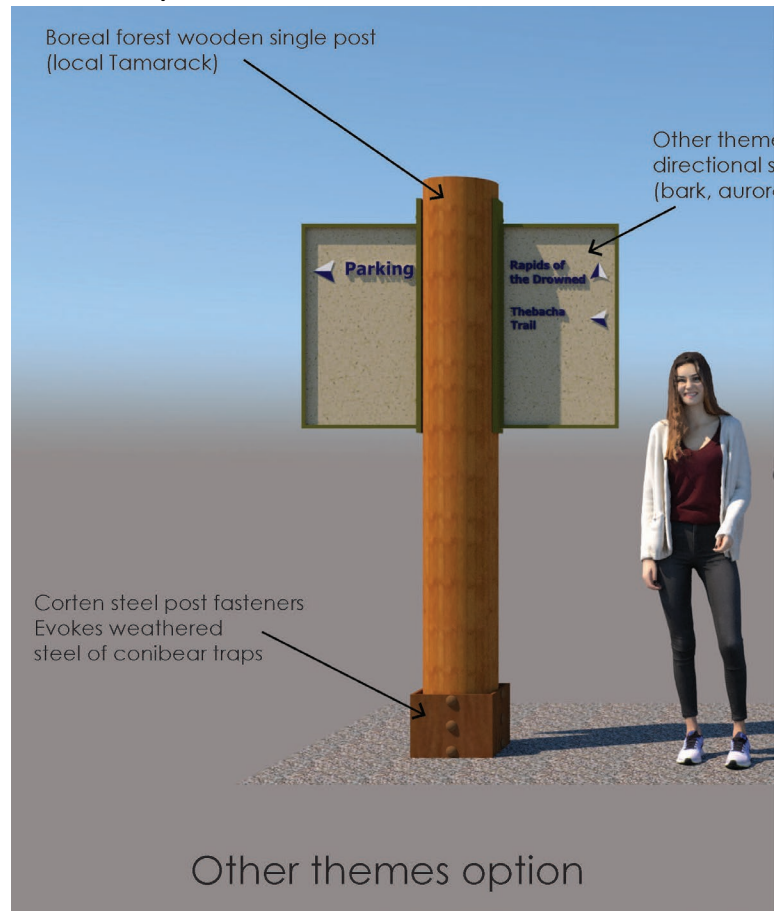
Option 1 (Rapids theme):



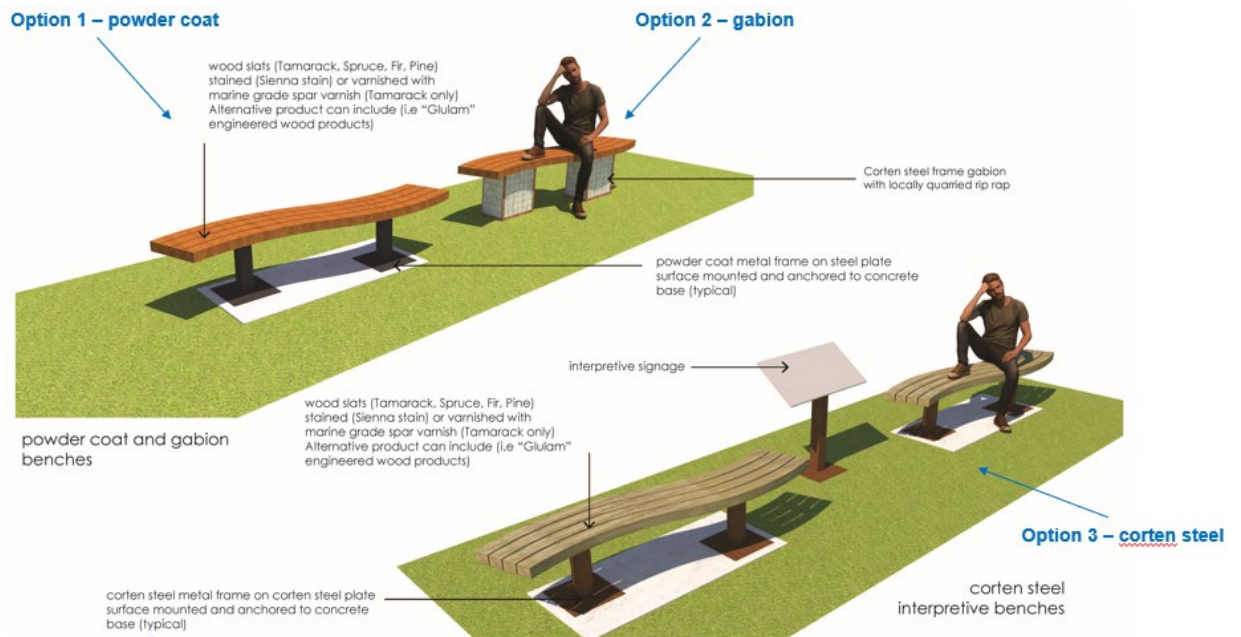
Option 2 (Rapids Theme):



Option 3 (Art Canvas Theme):

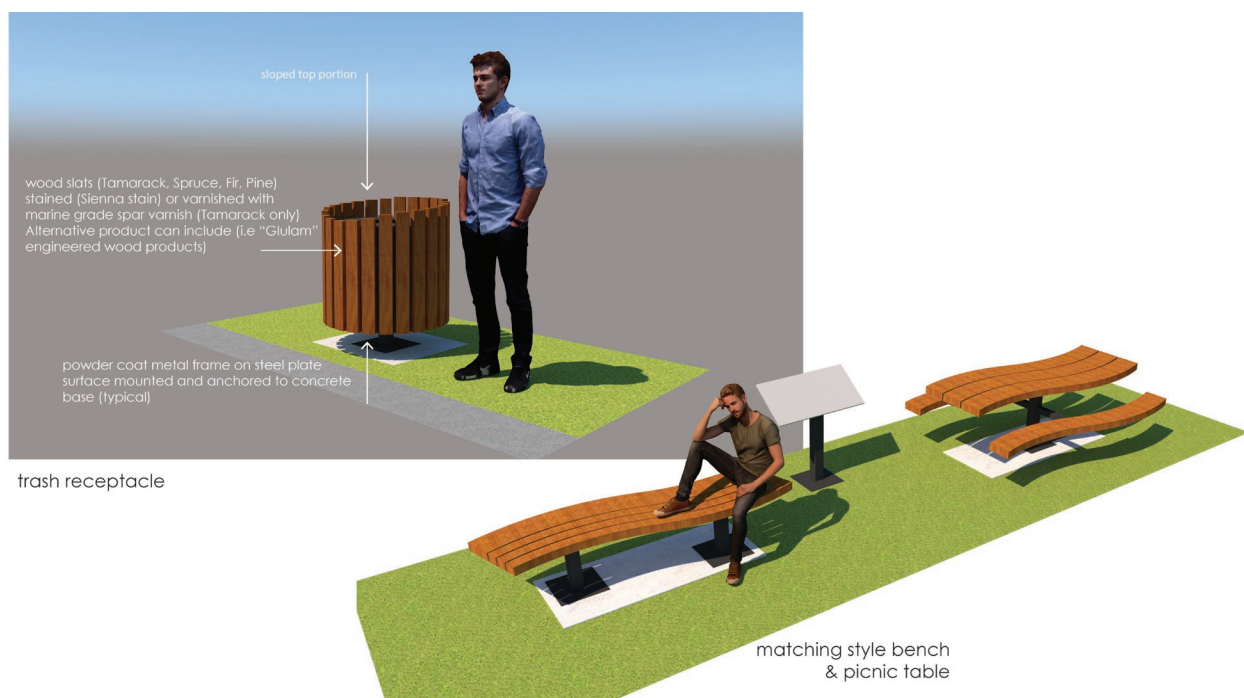


Conibear Park Preliminary Design & Landscape Amenities Standards



- Bench Style 1 (Powder Coat)
- Bench Style 2 (Gabion)
- Bench Style 2 (Corten Steel)

The proposed litter receptacle and picnic table amenities are shown below:



Conibear Park Preliminary Design & Landscape Amenities Standards

8. Please provide any feedback on the proposed litter receptacle amenity. (If none, please leave blank)
9. Please provide any feedback on the proposed picnic table amenity. (If none, please leave blank)
10. Is there anything else you would like to add related to the Conibear Park preliminary concept design, signage and landscape amenities?