



Franklin School, shown here in the 1950s, stood on this site for 68 years.



Franklin School class photo, c. 1907



Conceptual plan for Franklin Park, late 1970s

Neighbors transformed this place's history

The story of this park is one about neighbors stepping up to the plate to make their community a better place and to create something of value for generations to come.

This had been the site of the brick **Franklin Elementary School**, built in 1904 and demolished in 1972, which served the **York** and **Sehome** neighborhoods. In 1977, some of those residents attended public hearings of the Mayor's Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee and Parks Bond issue meetings to speak in favor of making the former school site a park, and the City acquired the property from the school district and **Franklin Park** became a reality.

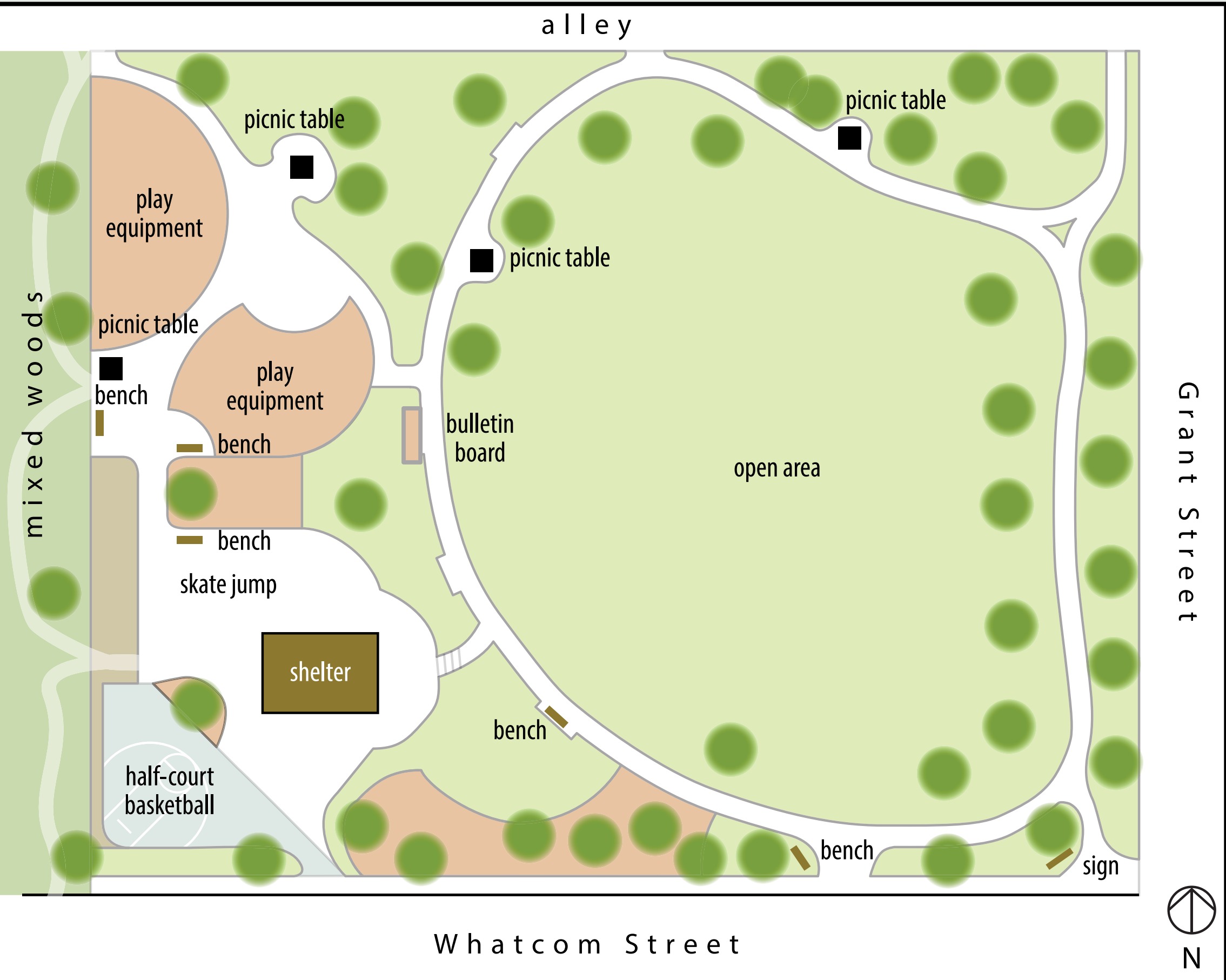


For the next 13 years the new park was in use, but by 1990 it was time to do something about the old school's playground equipment still in use. A Neighborhood Improvement Program grant was awarded in 1991, providing \$8,000+ to purchase new playground equipment and pay for other improvements. The neighborhood subsequently raised \$2,500 in funds, volunteer labor, and materials...and, in the years since, the activity of local volunteers around the park has contributed to its upkeep. In 2006, the City awarded the neighborhood association a Neighborhood Initiative Program grant of \$150,000 which funded a redesign and major upgrade of the park and its amenities...including evaluation of local playground equipment by kindergartners from the nearby Loving Space School on Ellis Street.



In August 2017, the park was officially renamed to honor **Harriet Spanel**, a Washington State Senator (1993-2009) and Legislator (1987-1993) for our legislative district, who had led that effort back in 1977 to create this park on the site of the former school.

Special thanks to Jeff Jewell and the Photo Archives of the Whatcom Museum



York Neighborhood Association



This sign was created by the York Neighborhood Association thanks to a City of Bellingham "Small and Simple" Grant.

- 1850 Seattle founded
Whatcom Mill established on Bellingham Bay
Washington Territory established
Whatcom County created
Town of Whatcom (now downtown Bellingham) established; town of Sehome founded
- 1860
- American Civil War
- 1870
- 1880 Town of Fairhaven founded by "Dirty Dan" Harris
Sehome renamed as New Whatcom
New Whatcom renamed back to Sehome
- 1890 Washington becomes the 42nd state of the Union
Towns of Whatcom and Sehome merge, becoming City of New Whatcom
- 1900 City of New Whatcom renamed as Whatcom
Fairhaven and Whatcom merge to become the City of **Bellingham**
- 1910
- World War I
- 1920
- 1930 The Great Depression
- 1940 World War II
Georgia-Pacific begins operations in Bellingham
- 1950 Korean War
- 1960 Bellingham section of Interstate 5 opens
- 1970 Vietnam War
- 1980
- 1990 Grant from City for park improvements
- 2000 City grant-funded Franklin Park Renovation Project adds shelter, trails, benches, basketball court
Jeff Reed memorial bench and skateboard jump installed
Parts of the York neighborhood receive National Register of Historic Places designation
Harriet Spanel dies
Franklin Park renamed as Harriet Spanel Park
- 2010 Georgia-Pacific mill closes
- 2020

