



MASSACHUSETTS DEPARTMENT OF
CONSERVATION AND RECREATION

The background of the slide is a photograph of a lush green landscape. In the foreground, there is a grassy field. In the middle ground, a line of trees separates the field from a distant, hazy horizon. The sky is visible through the branches of trees in the upper right corner, with sunlight filtering through the leaves. The overall scene is peaceful and natural.

Former GSA Site Passive Park Watertown

November 19, 2025 Public Meeting



Commonwealth of Massachusetts

Governor

Maura T. Healey

Lieutenant Governor

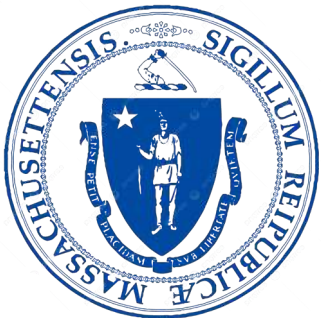
Kimberley Driscoll

Energy and Environmental Affairs Secretary

Rebecca L. Tepper

Department of Conservation and Recreation Commissioner

Nicole LaChapelle



dcr
Massachusetts



DCR Mission

*To protect, promote and enhance our
common wealth of natural, cultural
and recreational resources
for the well-being of all.*



dcr
Massachusetts



Core Principles

Provide access to a diversity of outdoor recreational experiences and unique landscapes that is equitable, inclusive, and welcoming

Conserve lands, water, and forests by integrating science, research, and technical expertise into the management of our natural resources

Advance climate change mitigation and adaptation efforts by implementing sustainable practices and advancing resiliency across our infrastructure, assets, and resources

Support healthy communities by providing places for people to connect with nature and each other

Inspire generations of stewards by recognizing and honoring our legacy through partnerships, public, engagement, and education



dcr
Massachusetts



Meeting Logistics



During the meeting:

- Use Q&A feature - comments go to moderator
- Raise your hand using available function, and you will be given permissions to unmute and speak

After the meeting:

- DCR Public Comments: **<https://www.mass.gov/forms/dcr-public-comments>**

Please note that this meeting is being recorded; the recording will be public record

Agenda

1. Project Introduction
2. Site History
3. Site Analysis
4. Project Goals
5. Future Opportunities
6. Conceptual Themes
7. Project Timeline
8. Questions & Comments

CONTEXT PLAN

West
Cambridge

Watertown

Brighton

Lower Allston

Hobart Park

Arsenal Park

Filippello Park

Mount Auburn
Cemetery

Approx. 1/2 mile radius

Dr. Paul Dudley White Bike Path

GSA SITE

Dr. Paul Dudley White Bike Path

BB&N Frank Field

Cambridge
Cemetery

Christian A. Herter Park

Portsmouth Street Playground

McKinney Park



CHARLES RIVER ECOLOGICAL CORRIDOR

Watertown-Cambridge Greenway

Coolidge Ave

Leo M Birmingham Pkwy

Soldiers Field Rd

Arsenal St

Greenough Blvd



PROJECT TEAM



DESIGN TEAM PRIME CONSULTANT



DESIGN TEAM SUB-CONSULTANTS



ENVIRONMENTAL



CIVIL ENGINEER



**BARTLETT
TREE EXPERTS**

ARBORIST



GRAY & PAPE
HERITAGE MANAGEMENT

ARCHAEOLOGY

SITE PLAN

Aggregate Industries

99 Coolidge Ave.
Parking

99 Coolidge Ave.
Revival Cafe

Horizon East Condos

Charles River Towers

McVey
Stone Co.

Project Boundary

Entrance

Soil Mound

Wetland

Arsenal Street

Greenough Blvd

Dr. Paul Dudley White Bike Path

Dr. Paul Dudley White Bike Path

Charles River

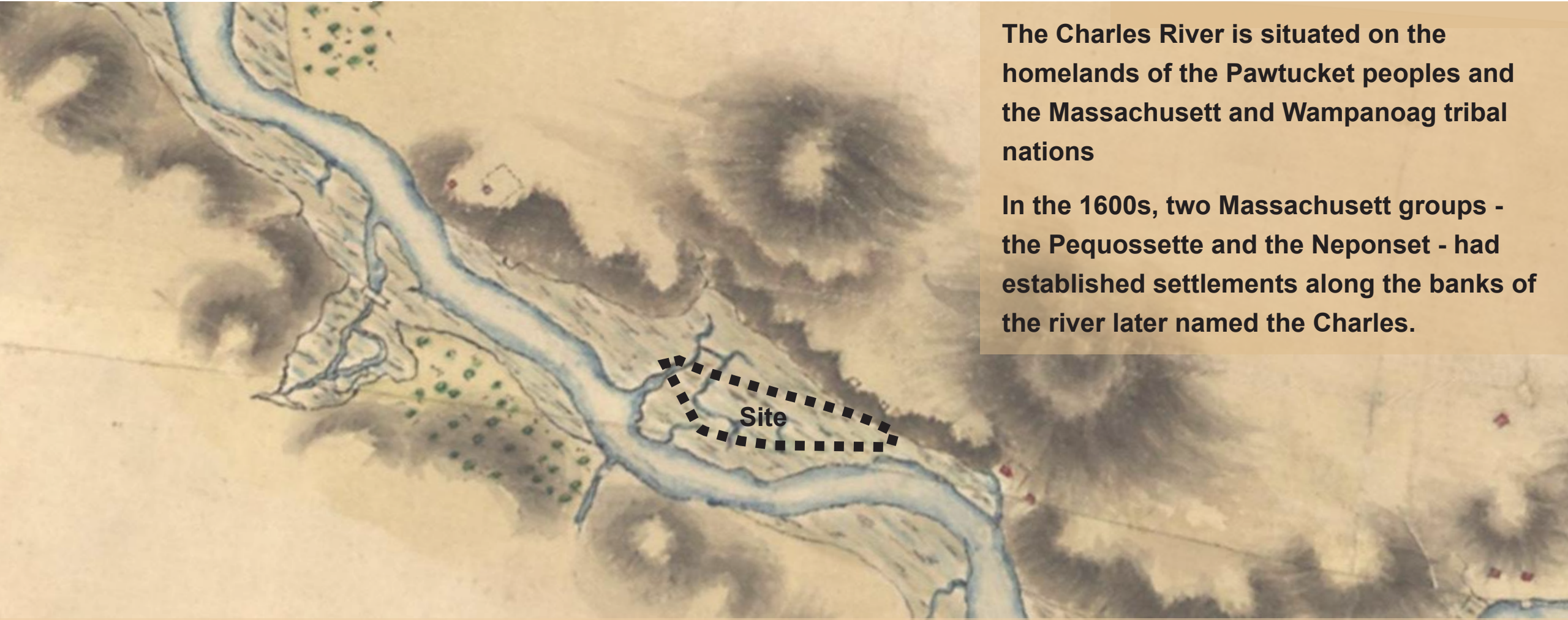
Not to Scale

Site History

1. Historic Maps
2. Aerial Images
3. Site Remediation
4. Site Limitations

1770

HISTORIC MAPS



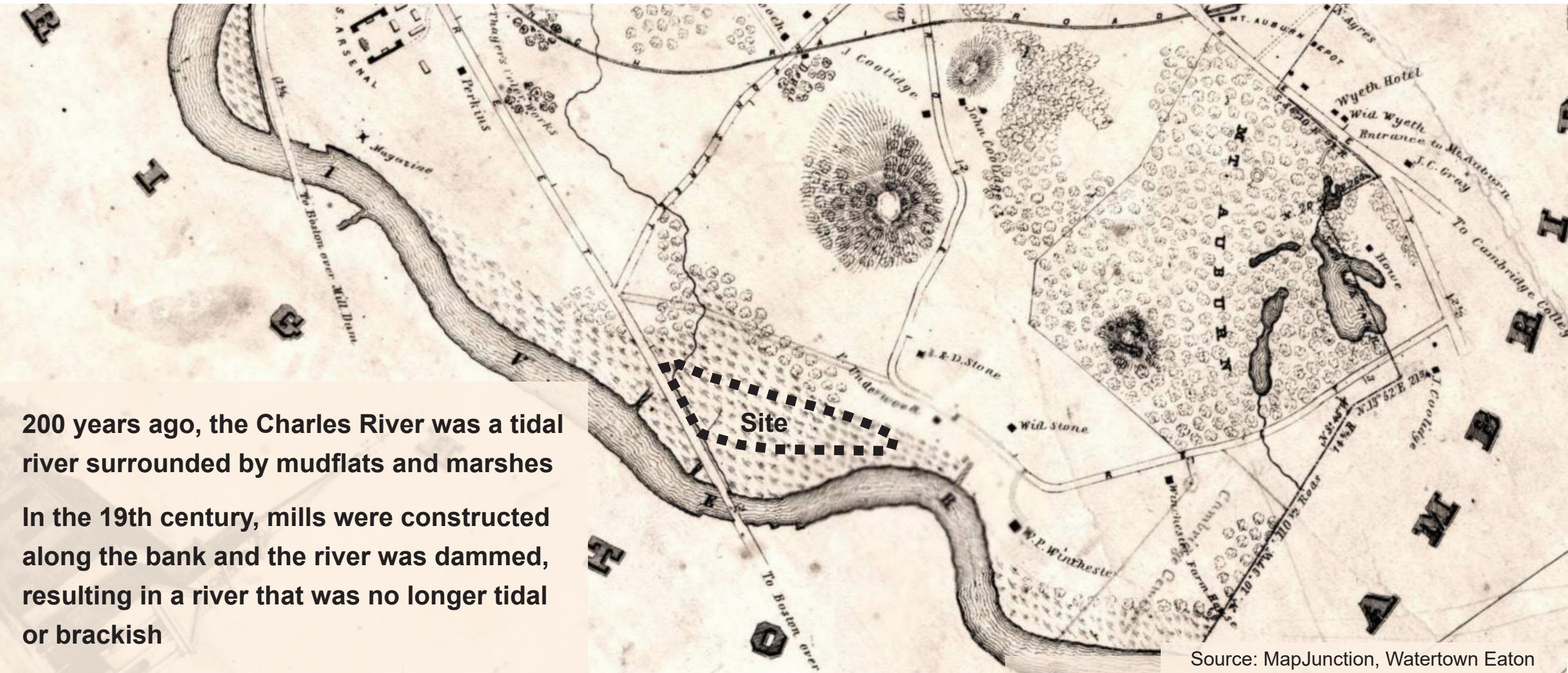
The Charles River is situated on the homelands of the Pawtucket peoples and the Massachusett and Wampanoag tribal nations

In the 1600s, two Massachusett groups - the Pequossette and the Neponset - had established settlements along the banks of the river later named the Charles.

Sources: MapJunction, Library of Congress; "The History of the Neponset Band of the Indigenous Massachusett Tribe", The Massachusett Tribe at Ponkapoag; "Native Peoples Lived in Belmont", Belmont Citizens Forum; "History: Land and Water Acknowledgement", Charles River Conservancy; Native-Land.ca/map

1850

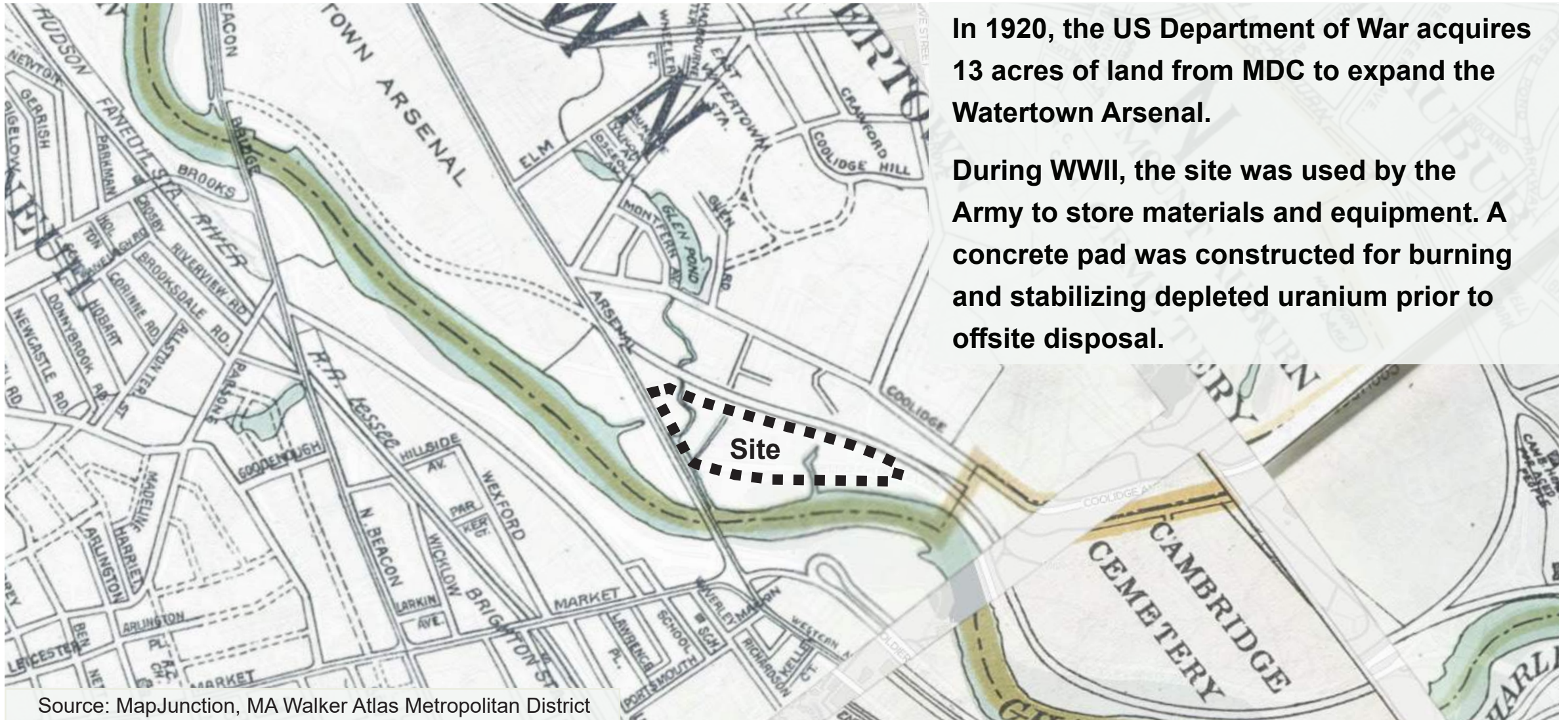
HISTORIC MAPS



Source: MapJunction, Watertown Eaton

1920

HISTORIC MAPS

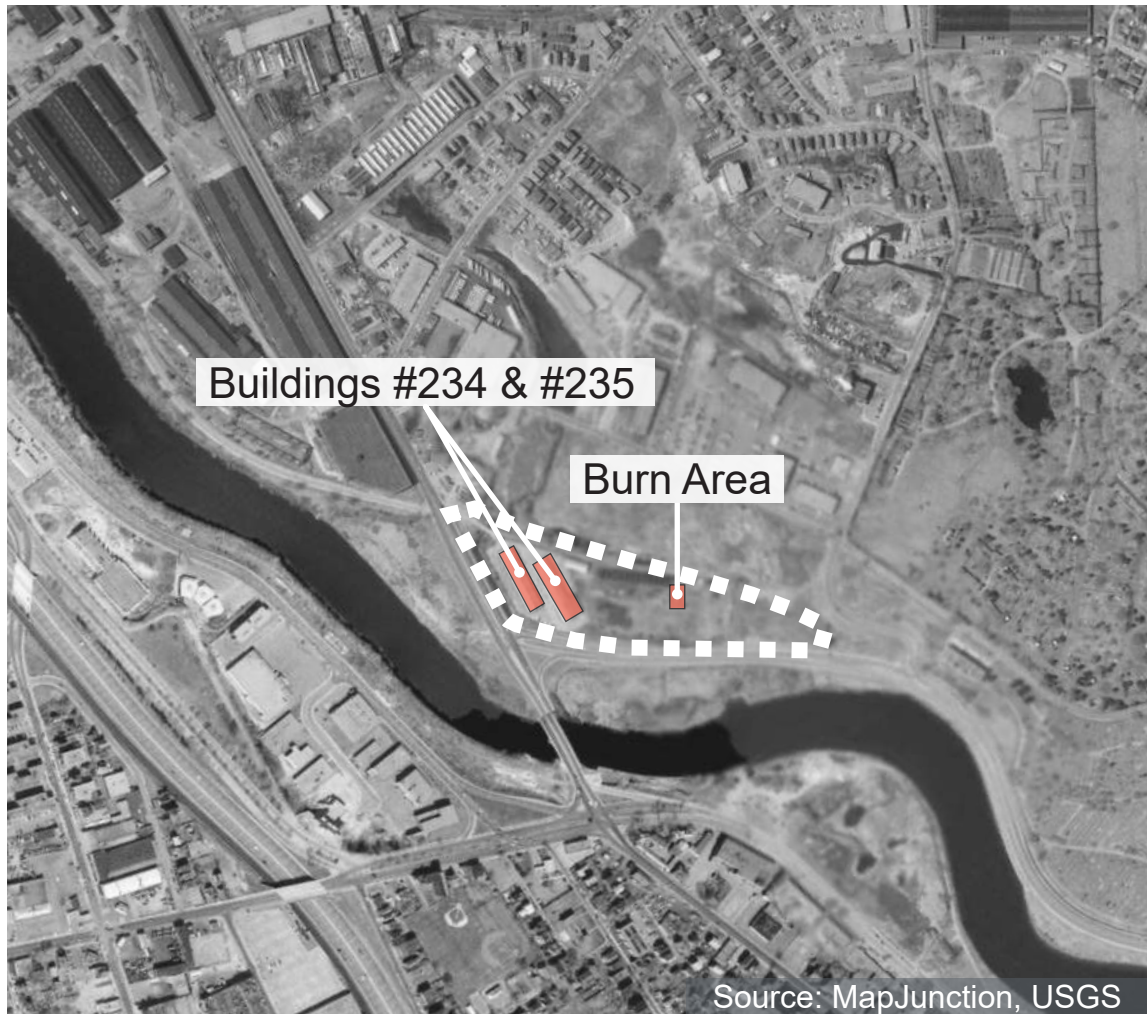


In 1920, the US Department of War acquires 13 acres of land from MDC to expand the Watertown Arsenal.

During WWII, the site was used by the Army to store materials and equipment. A concrete pad was constructed for burning and stabilizing depleted uranium prior to offsite disposal.

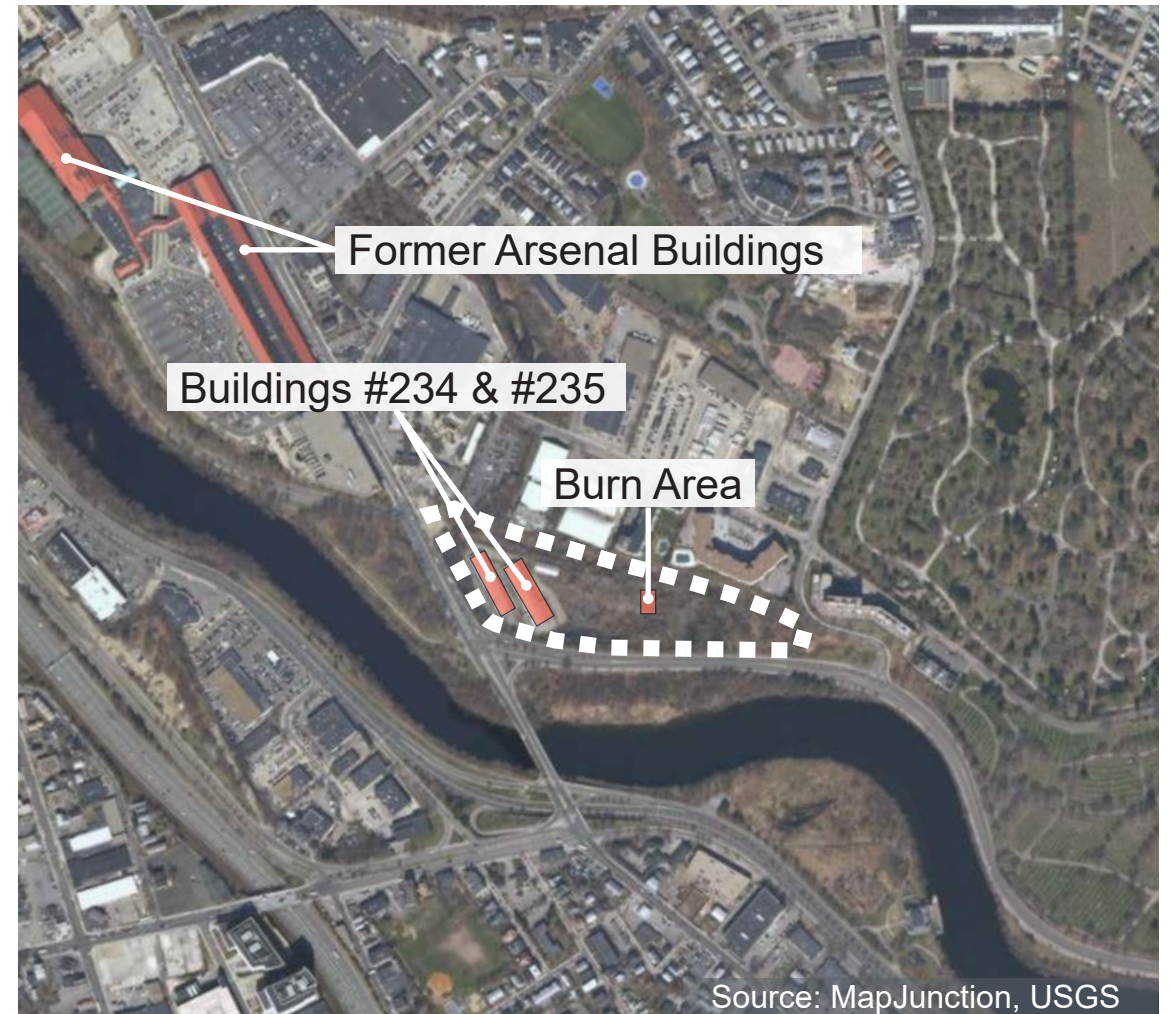
Source: MapJunction, MA Walker Atlas Metropolitan District

1969



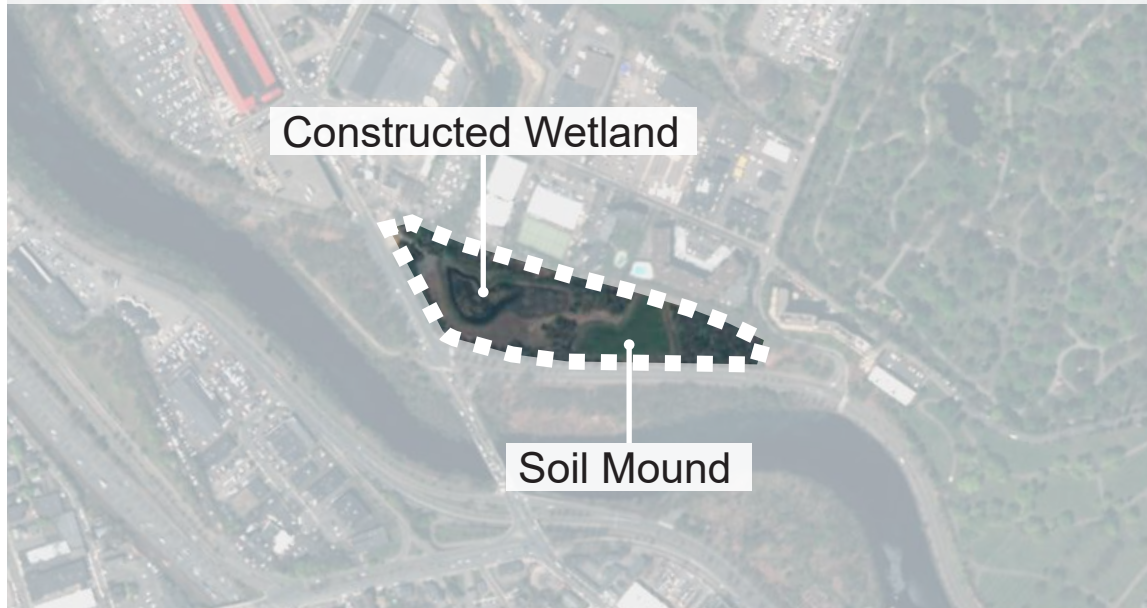
2005

AERIAL IMAGES



2015

From 2012 - 2014, the Army Corps of Engineers excavated and removed soil heavily contaminated with PCBs. Remaining soils with PCB contamination were safely capped under a soil covered mound.



USACE also constructed new wetlands to replace the historic wetlands altered by the soil mound.

2025

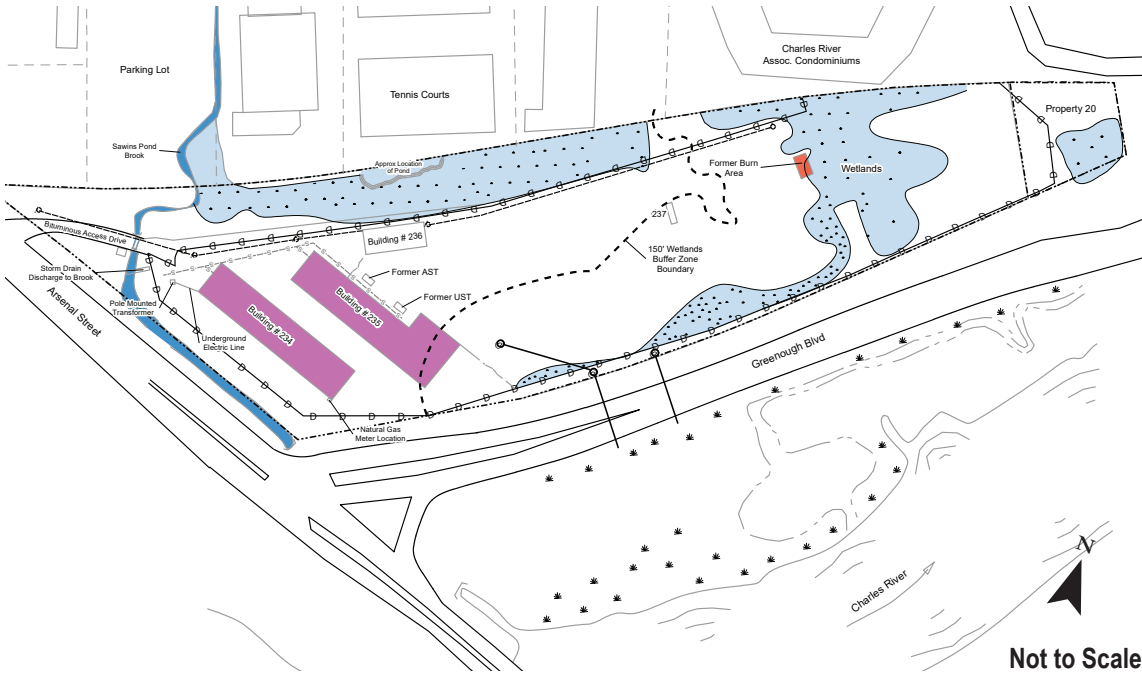
AERIAL IMAGES



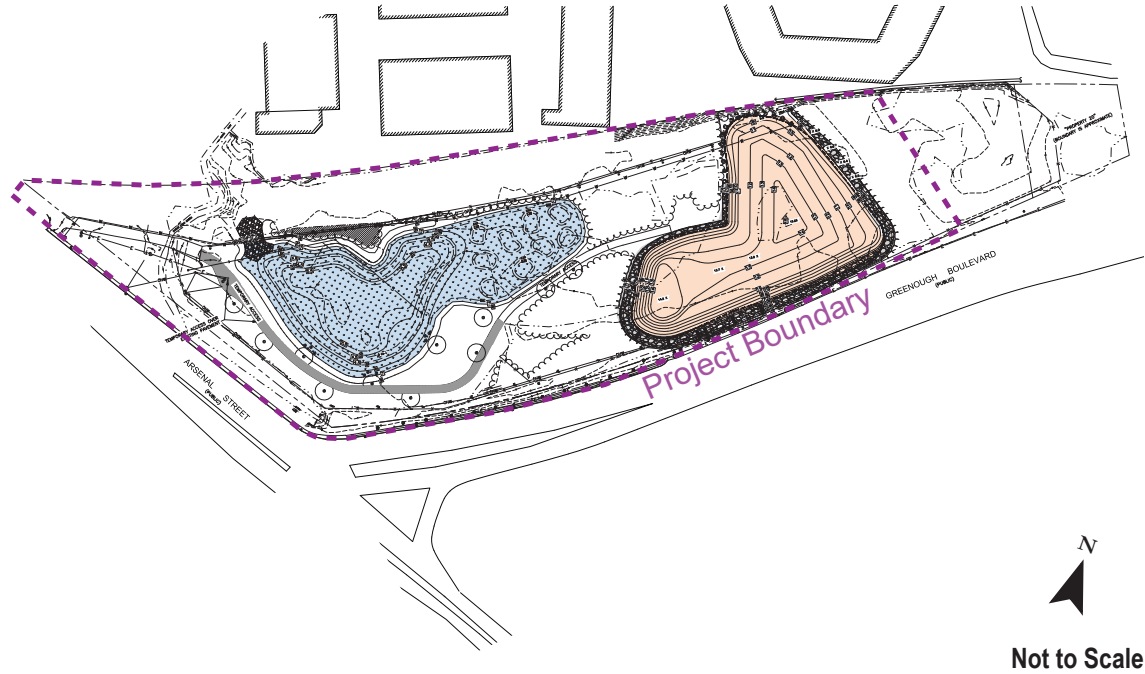
Source: MapJunction, MassGIS

SITE PLAN
before & after remediation

Before Remediation



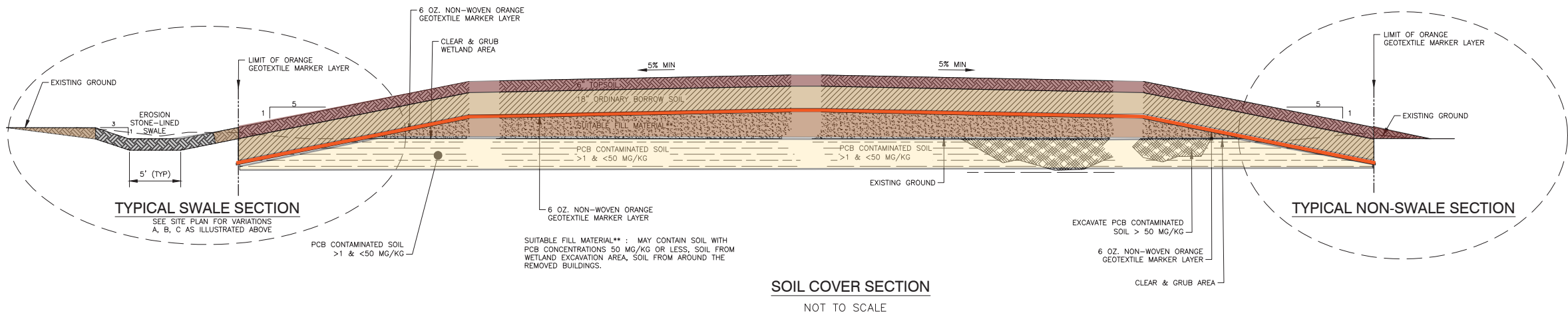
After Remediation



Constructed Wetland 
Soil Mound 

SOIL MOUND

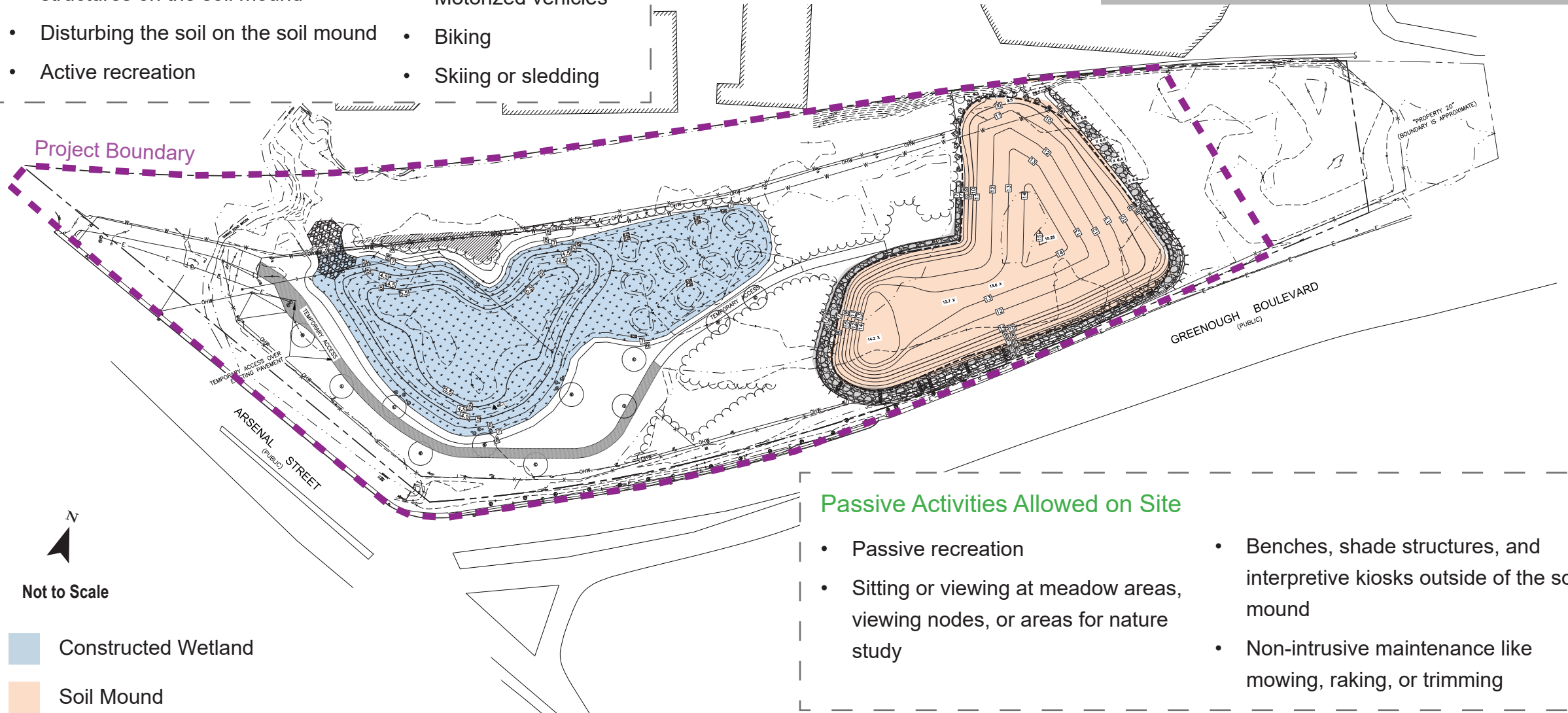
soil cover section



Activities Not Allowed on Site

- Digging, drilling, or construction of structures on the soil mound
- Disturbing the soil on the soil mound
- Active recreation
- Gardening
- Motorized vehicles
- Biking
- Skiing or sledding

SITE PLAN site limitations



Passive Activities Allowed on Site

- Passive recreation
- Sitting or viewing at meadow areas, viewing nodes, or areas for nature study
- Benches, shade structures, and interpretive kiosks outside of the soil mound
- Non-intrusive maintenance like mowing, raking, or trimming

Existing Conditions

1. Site Diagrams

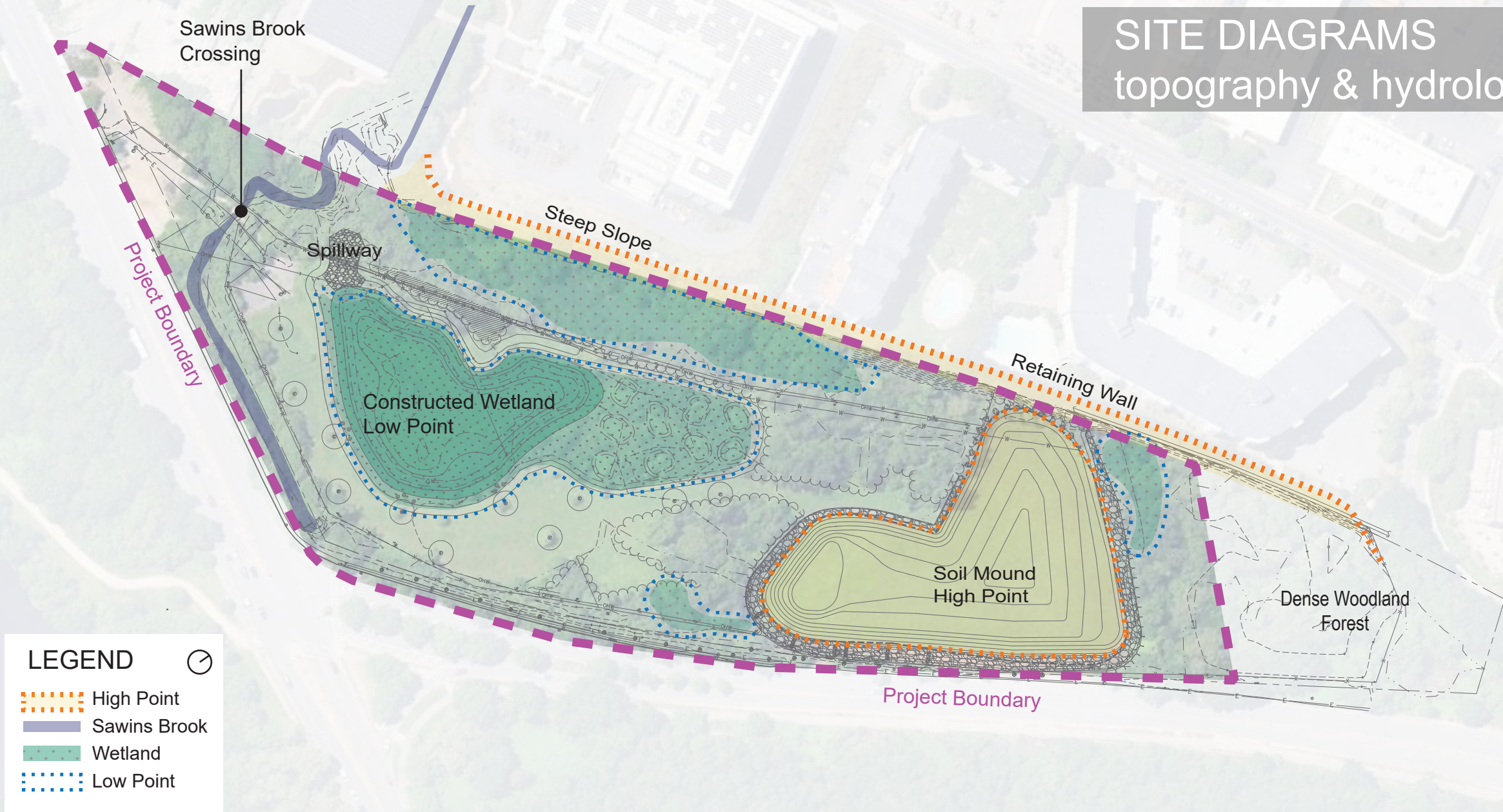
SITE DIAGRAMS

existing circulation



SITE DIAGRAMS

topography & hydrology



SITE DIAGRAMS

USACE circulation plan



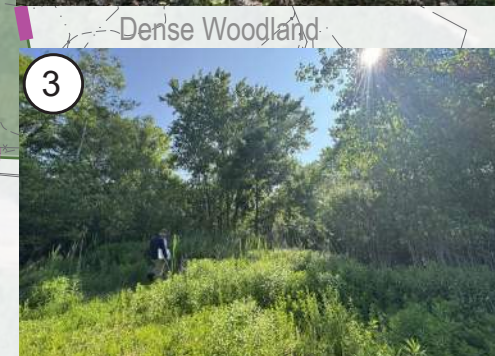
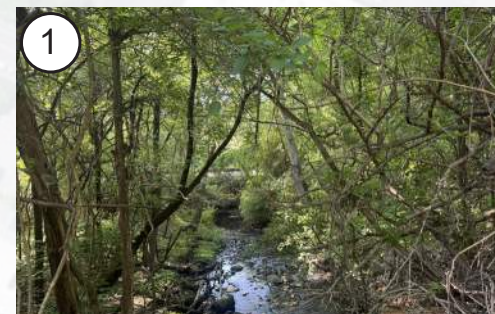
SITE DIAGRAMS

vegetation types



SITE DIAGRAMS

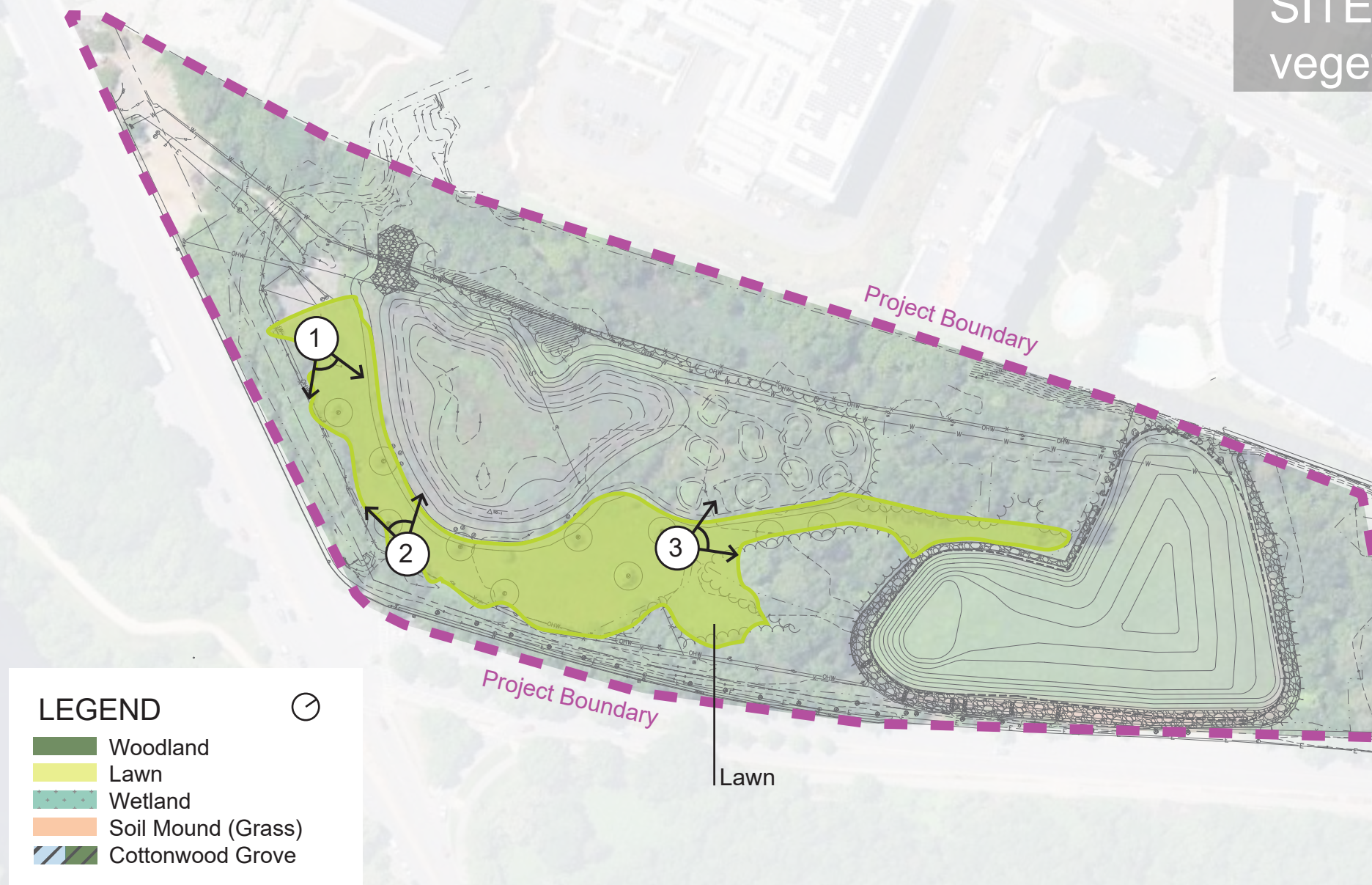
vegetation types - woodland



Dense Woodland

SITE DIAGRAMS

vegetation types - lawn



SITE DIAGRAMS

vegetation types - wetlands



SITE DIAGRAMS

soil mound



SITE DIAGRAMS

vegetation types - cottonwood grove



LEGEND

- Woodland
- Lawn
- Wetland
- Soil Mound (Grass)
- Cottonwood Grove



Site Opportunities

1. Design Goals and Project Vision
2. Site Analysis

PROJECT GOALS:

- A safe and welcoming passive park including trails and seating areas
- Highlight the site history and context, constructed wetlands, and existing vistas
- Connection to existing bike and pedestrian networks, including evaluating safe crossing of Arsenal Street to access parking on Greenough Blvd
- Universally accessible parking spaces
- Signage: welcome wayside and wayfinding; identification of possible interpretive signage themes and sign locations

DESIGN GOALS AND PROJECT VISION

- Nature-based design for stormwater management, including evaluating the performative and aesthetic qualities related to bank stabilization requirements of the open stream that links Sawins Pond to the Charles River
- A strong focus on landscape restoration including the preservation and performance of existing mitigation area which includes a mound and a drainage swale
- Stormwater and vegetation management to address encroachment into mitigation swale
- Assessment of the security fence surrounding the site, for quality, possible replacement, and extent of future fencing to meet program goals.



SITE ANALYSIS

site opportunities

LEGEND

Sawins Brook

Open Space (Passive Program)

Vista Moments (Pause)

Thresholds (Transition)

Sensory (Feel)

Forest Canopy (Covered)





SITE ANALYSIS

open space



SITE ANALYSIS

overlooks and vistas

1 Long view of wetland

3 Far-side wetland view

4 Cottonwood Grove

6 Wall and woodland

2 Short view of wetland

5 Long view to road & river's woodland edge

LEGEND

- Open Space (Passive Program)
- Moments (Pause)
- Thresholds (Transition)
- Sensory (Feel)
- Forest Canopy (Covered)



Overlook / Vista



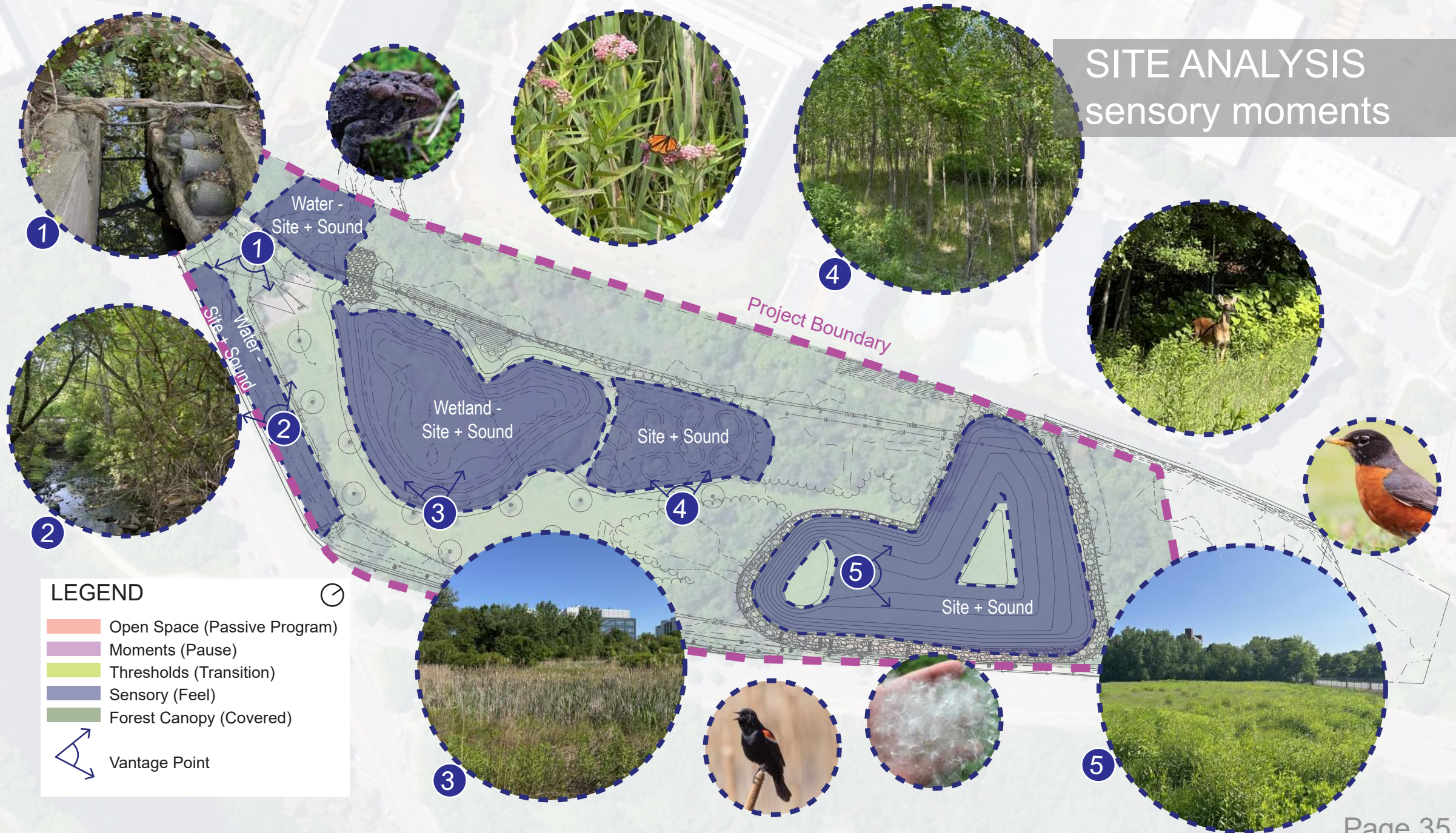
SITE ANALYSIS

thresholds and transitions



SITE ANALYSIS

sensory moments



SITE ANALYSIS

existing tree canopy

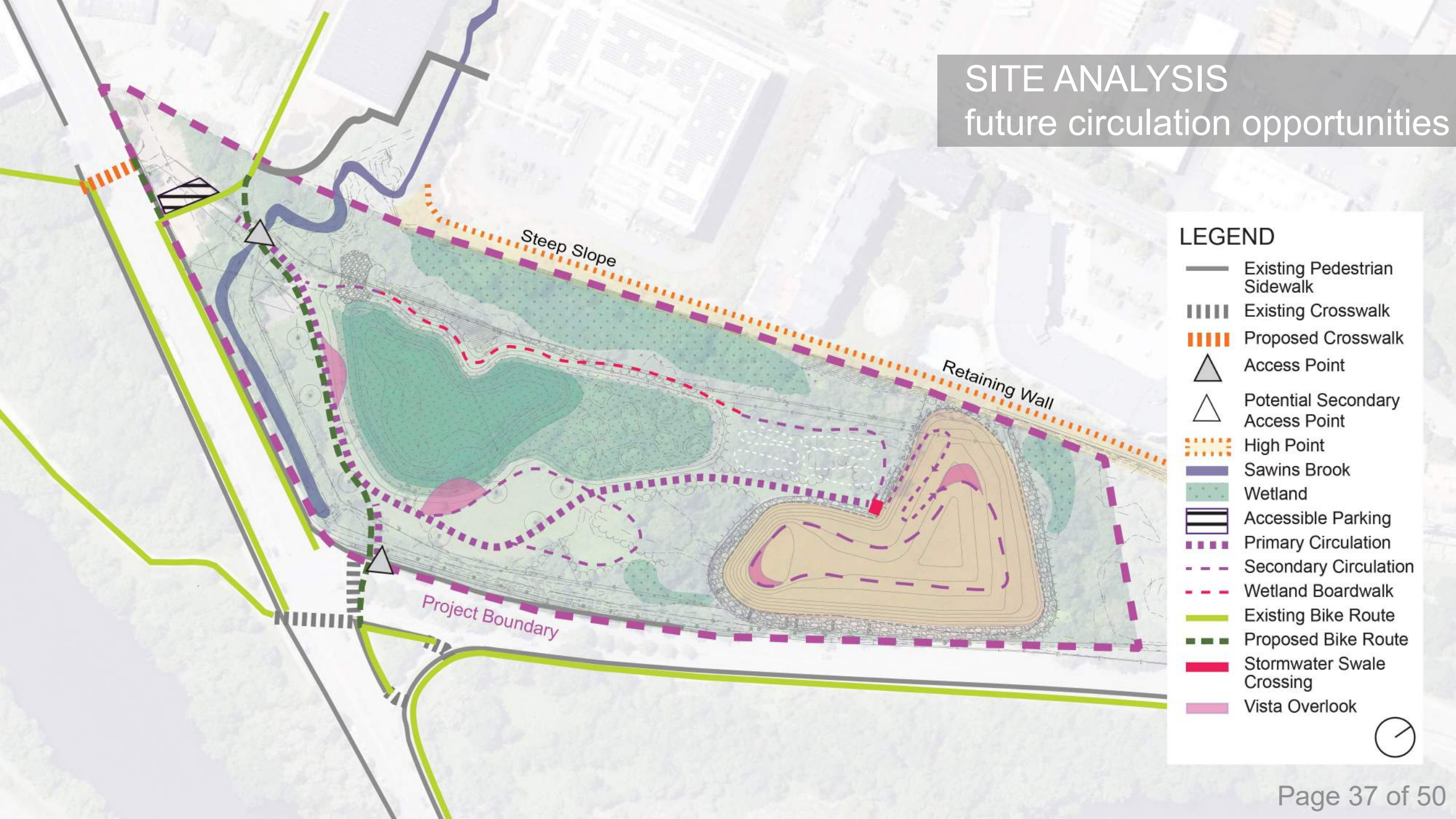


LEGEND

- Open Space (Passive Program)
- Moments (Pause)
- Thresholds (Transition)
- Sensory (Feel)
- Existing Tree Canopy (Covered)
- Vantage Point

SITE ANALYSIS

future circulation opportunities



LEGEND

- Existing Pedestrian Sidewalk
- Existing Crosswalk
- Proposed Crosswalk
- Access Point
- Potential Secondary Access Point
- High Point
- Sawins Brook
- Wetland
- Accessible Parking
- Primary Circulation
- Secondary Circulation
- Wetland Boardwalk
- Existing Bike Route
- Proposed Bike Route
- Stormwater Swale Crossing
- Vista Overlook

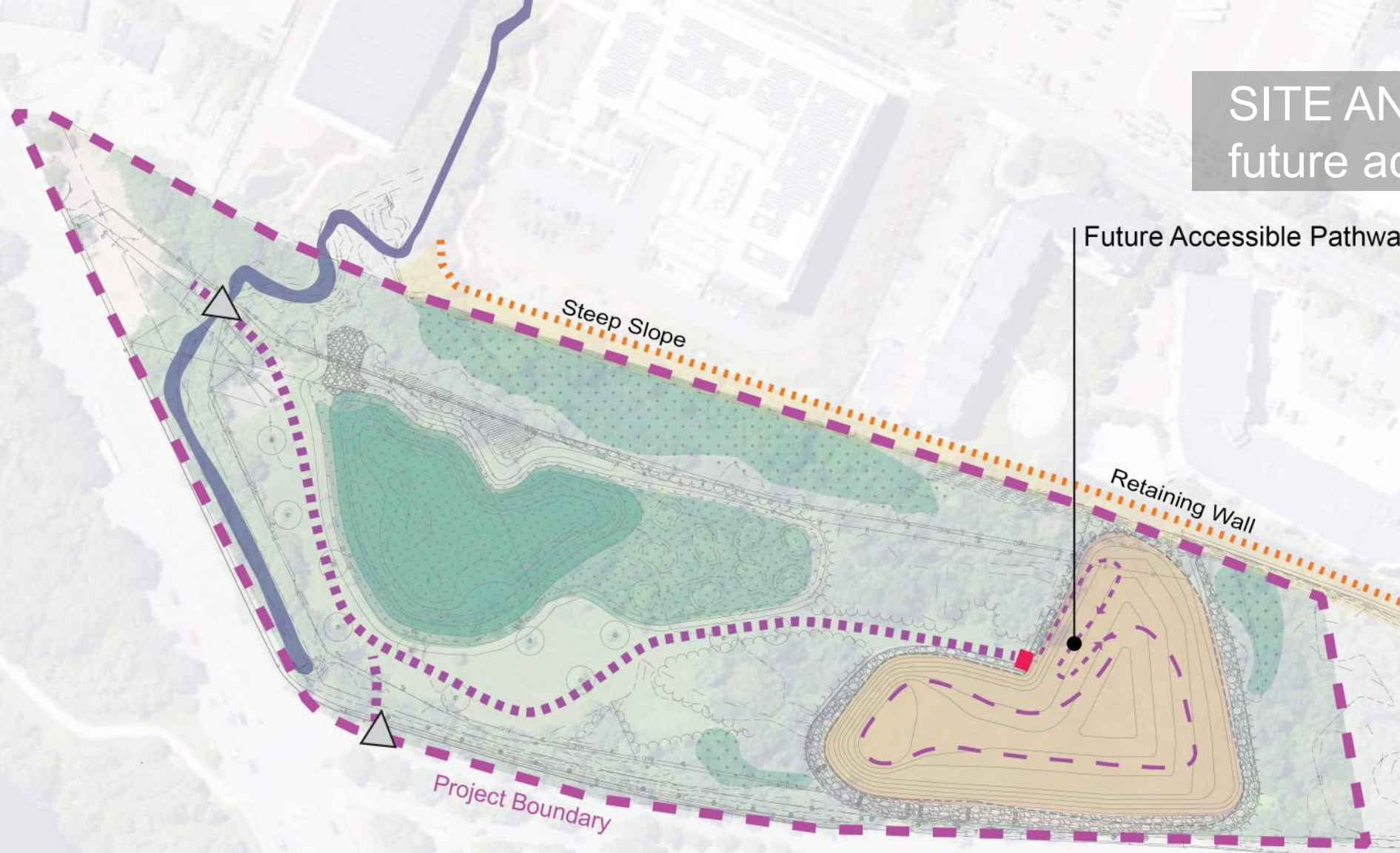
SITE ANALYSIS

future multi-use/bike path



SITE ANALYSIS

future accessible pathway



LEGEND

-  Access Point
-  High Point
-  Sawins Brook
-  Wetland
-  Primary Circulation
-  Secondary Circulation
-  Stormwater Swale Crossing



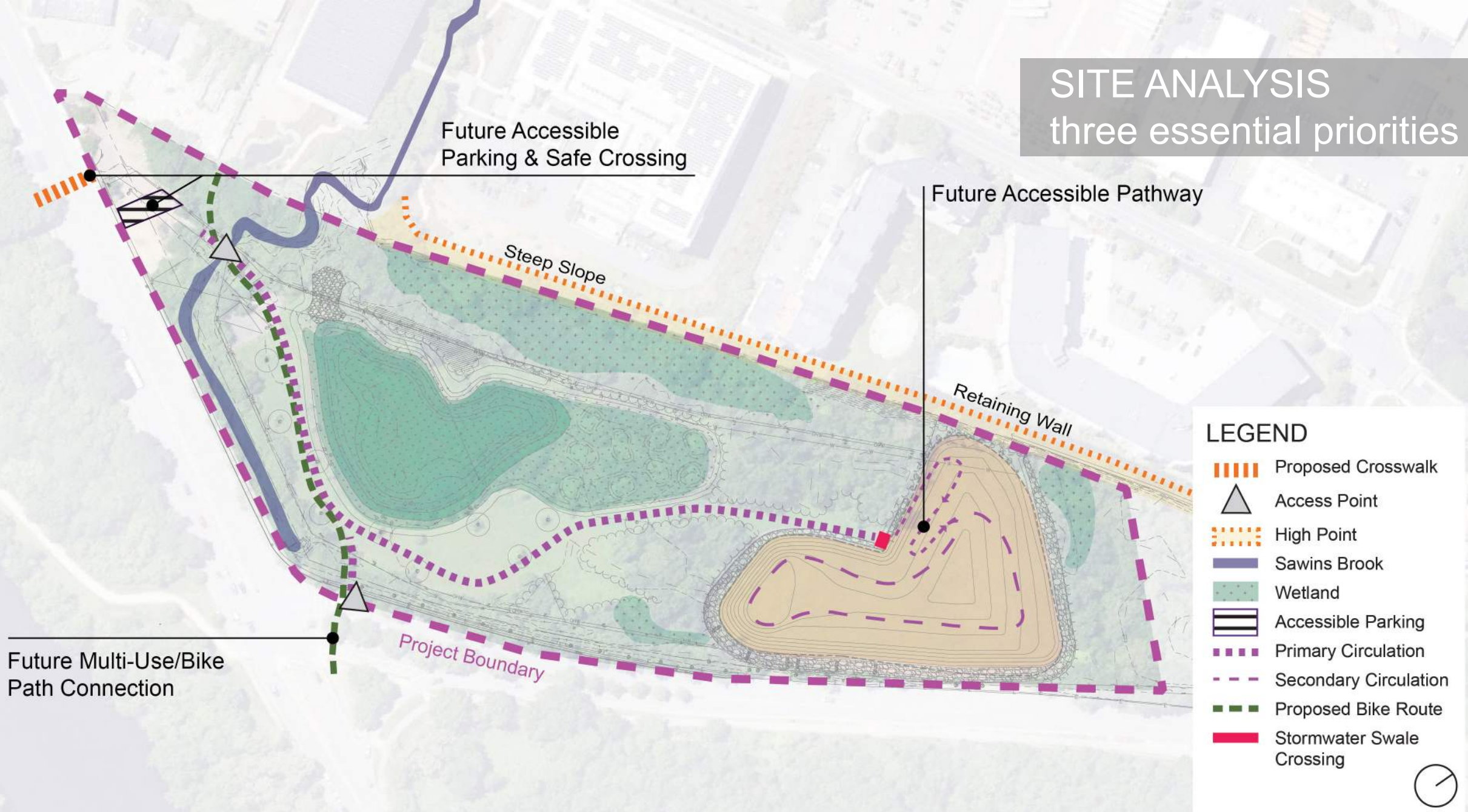
SITE ANALYSIS

future accessible parking



SITE ANALYSIS

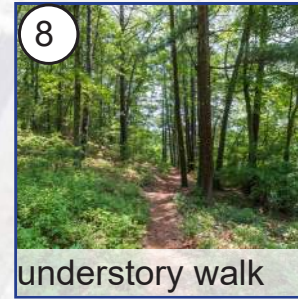
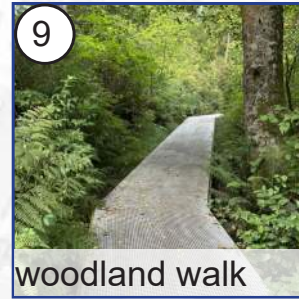
three essential priorities



Conceptual Themes

1. Nature Walk
2. Sensory Stroll
3. Transformation Story

NATURE WALK (ecological connections)



SENSORY STROLL (the human experience)



Sawins brook



nature play



colors of nature



discovery walk



sensory play



vista point



whispering winds



sounds of nature

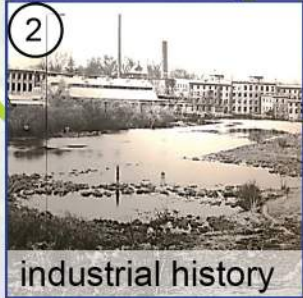


passive lawn



TRANSFORMATION STORY

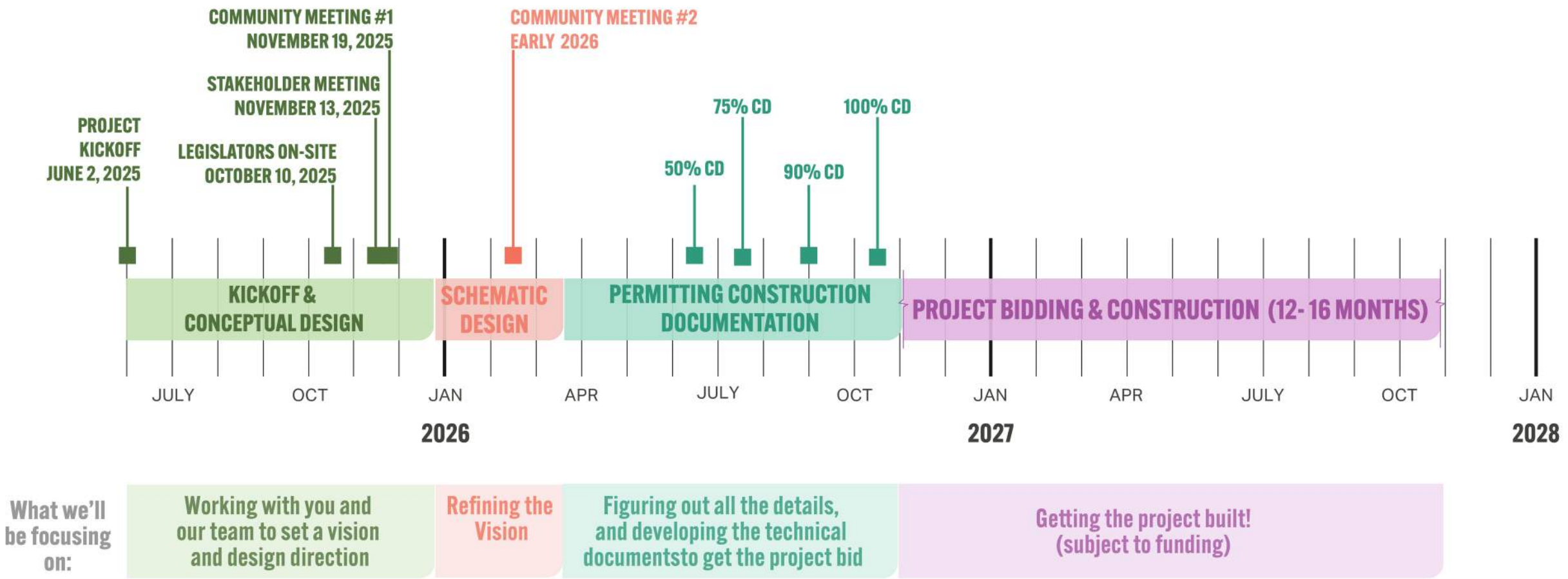
(healing the landscape)



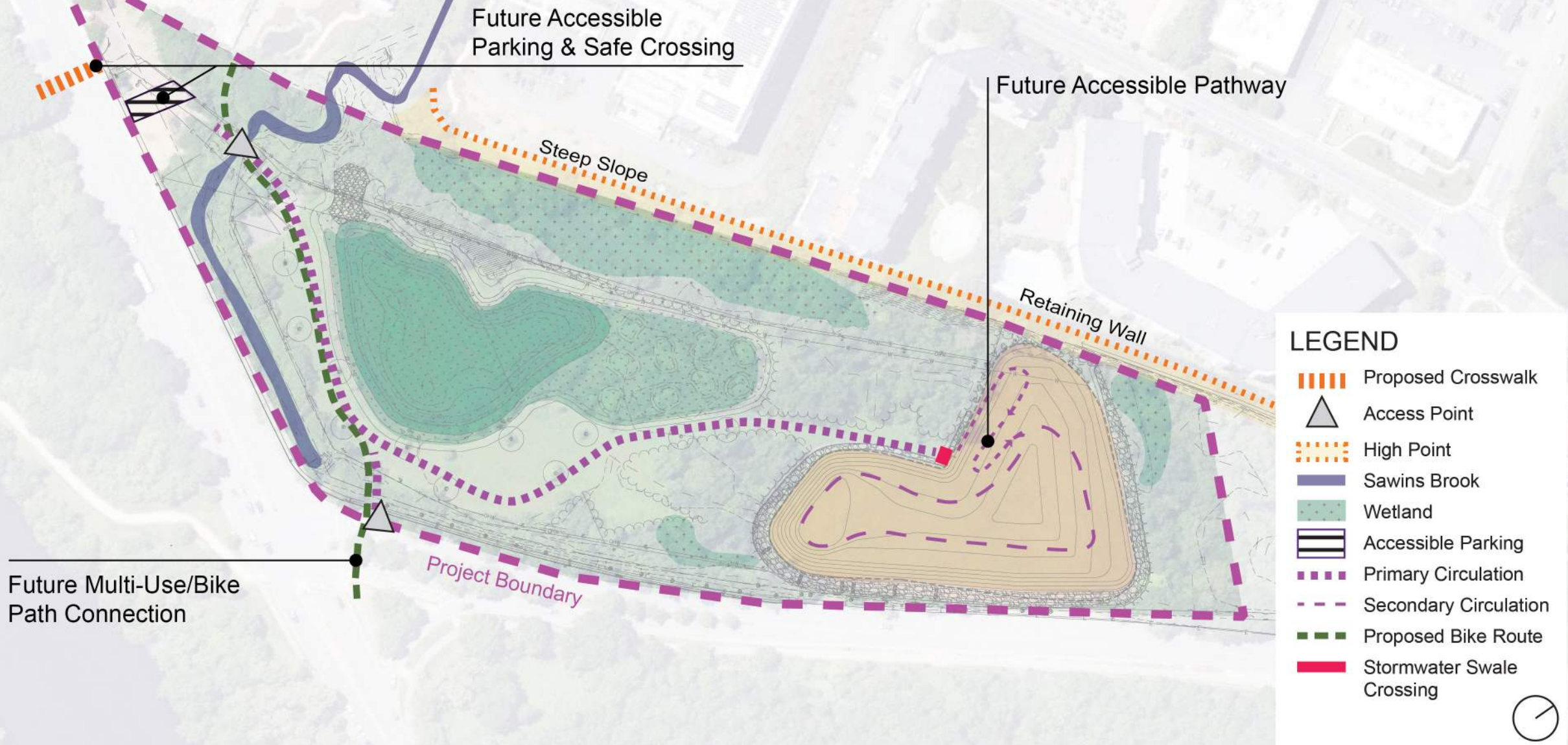
Next Steps

1. Project Timeline
2. Questions & Comments

Project Timeline



Questions & Comments?



Additional Information

- Recording and tonight's slide deck will be available at:

- www.mass.gov/dcr/past-public-meetings

- If you have comments on this project:

- *Submit online:* www.mass.gov/dcr/public-comment

- *Deadline: Wednesday, December 3rd, 2025*

Please note: the contents of comments submitted to DCR, including your name, town and zip code, will be posted on DCR's website. Additional contact information provided, notably email address, will only be used for outreach on future updates to the subject project or property.

- If you wish to subscribe to a DCR general information or project-related listserv: contact DCR's Office of Community Relations via email at mass.parks@mass.gov

