



# New Passive Park at Charles River Reservation

**Watertown, MA**

May 7, 2026 Public Meeting #2



# 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**



## OUR MISSION:

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

## OUR 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.

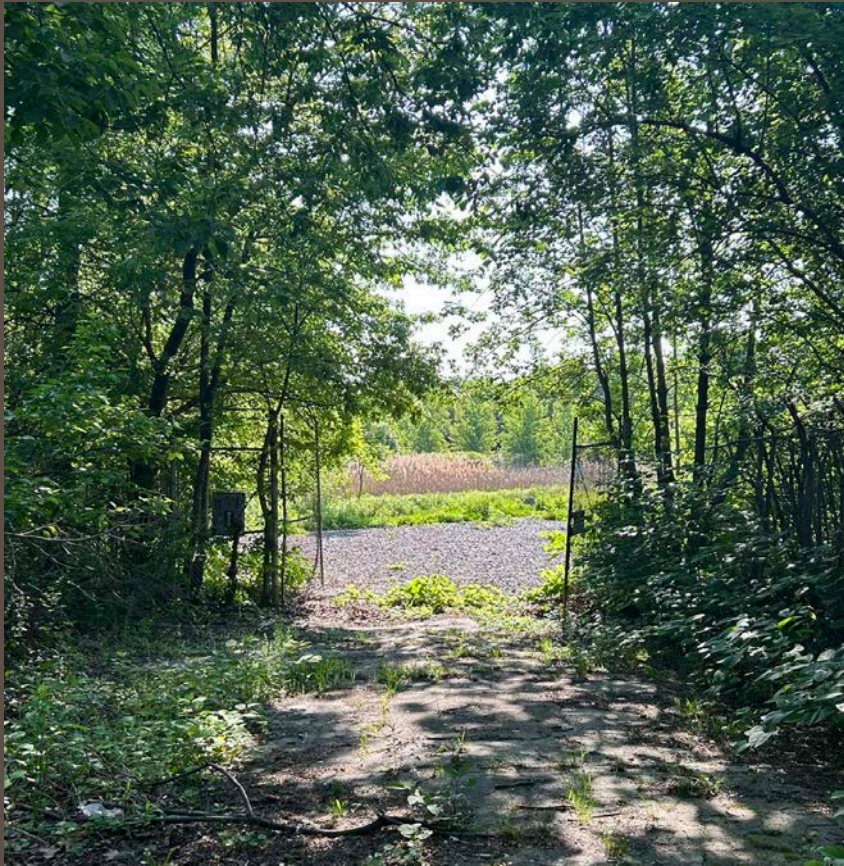


## MEETING LOGISTICS

The project team will give a presentation, then the public can ask questions and provide feedback live during the meeting by:

- Using the Q&A feature, where comments will be sent to the moderator.
- Raising your hand using the 'raise your hand' feature on Zoom. You will be given permission to unmute and speak.

*Please note that this meeting is being recorded: the recording will be public record.*



# Agenda

1. Project Introduction
2. Project Team
3. Site Analysis
4. Project Goals
5. Community Meeting #1 Recap
6. Schematic Design
7. Land Stewardship
8. Project Timeline
9. Questions & Comments

# CONTEXT PLAN

West  
Cambridge

Watertown

SITE

Hobart Park

Arsenal Park

Filippello Park

Newton Corner

Parking Area on Greenough Blvd

Coolidge Ave

Mount Auburn Cemetery

Dr. Paul Dudley White Bike Path

Approx. 1/2 mile radius

Dr. Paul Dudley White Bike Path

McKinney Park

BB&N Frank Field

Cambridge Cemetery

Portsmouth Street Playground

Christian A. Herter Park

Brighton

Lower Allston





**DESIGN TEAM PRIME CONSULTANT**



**DESIGN TEAM SUB-CONSULTANTS**



# EXISTING CONDITION

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

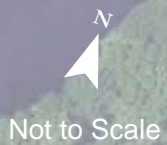
Arsenal Street

Greenough Blvd

Dr. Paul Dudley White Bike Path

Dr. Paul Dudley White Bike Path

Charles River

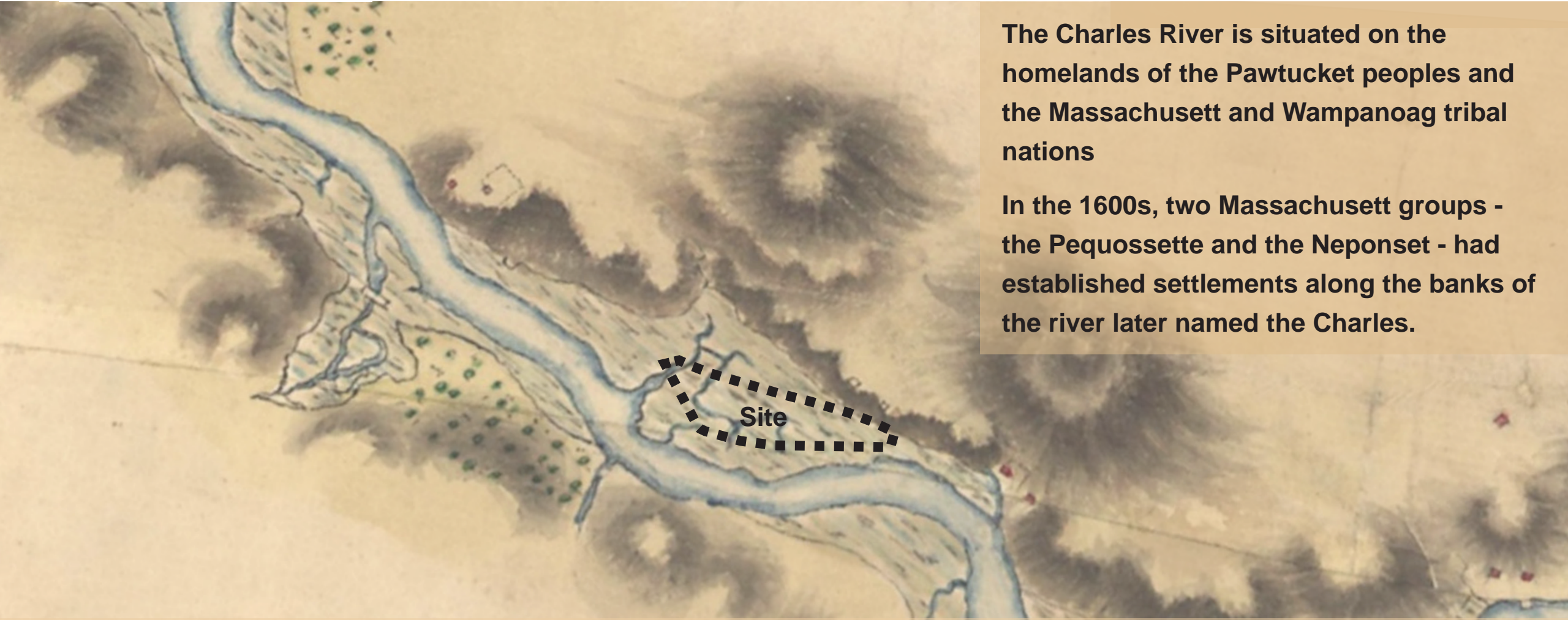


# Site History

1. Historic Development and Site Restrictions
2. Existing Conditions and Context

# 1770

## HISTORIC MAPS



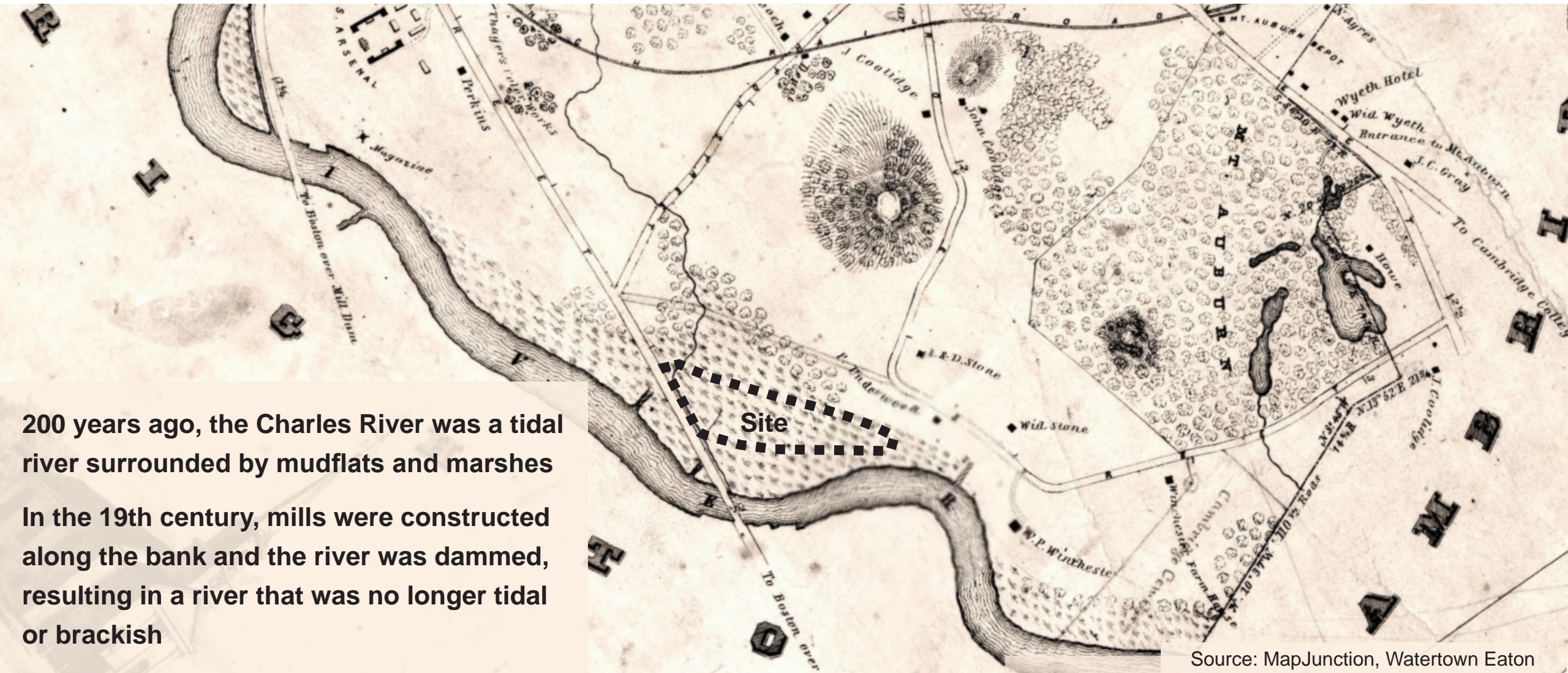
The Charles River is situated on the homelands of the Pawtucket peoples and the Massachusett and Wampanoag tribal nations

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

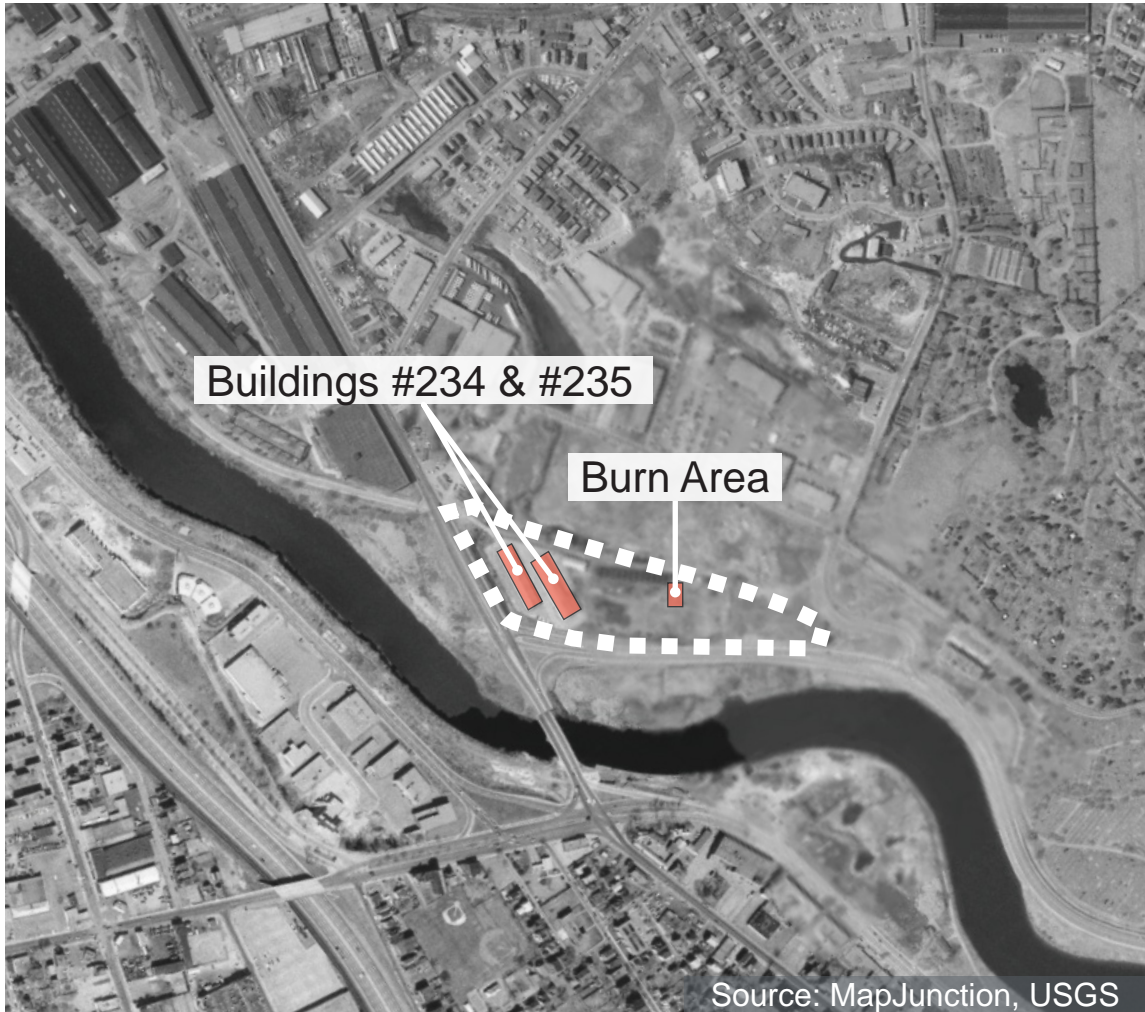


200 years ago, the Charles River was a tidal river surrounded by mudflats and marshes

In the 19th century, mills were constructed along the bank and the river was dammed, resulting in a river that was no longer tidal or brackish

Source: MapJunction, Watertown Eaton

# 1969



# 2015

## AERIAL IMAGES

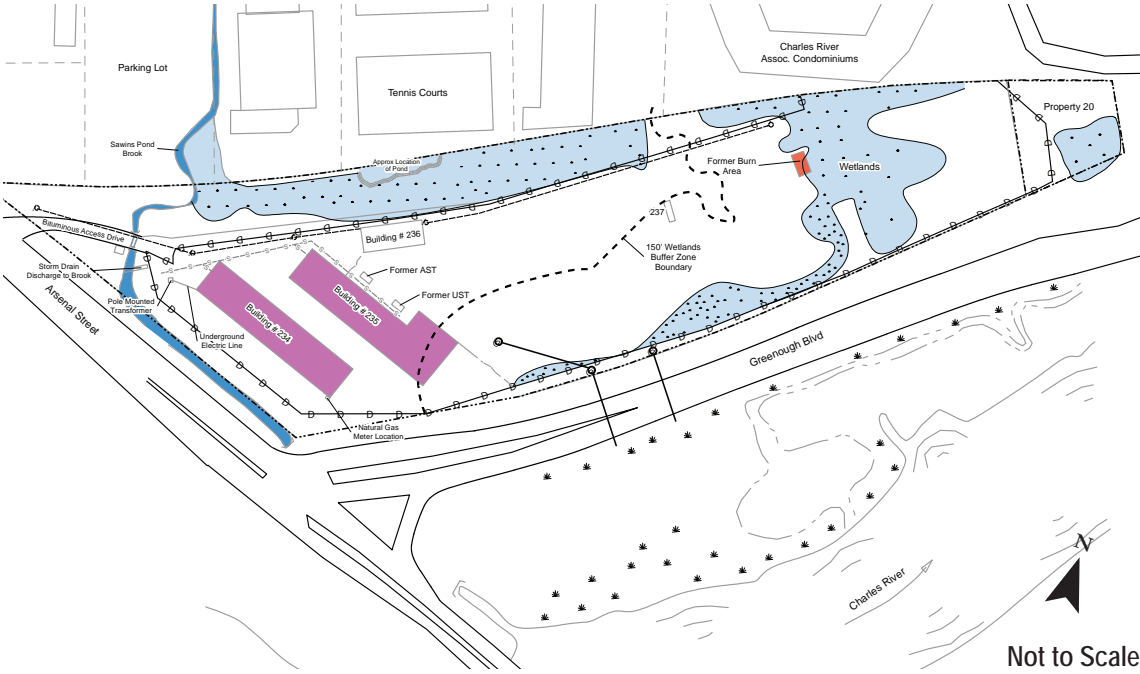
From 2012 - 2014, the Army Corps of Engineers excavated and removed soil heavily contaminated with PCBs. Remaining soils with PCB contamination were safely capped under a soil covered mound.



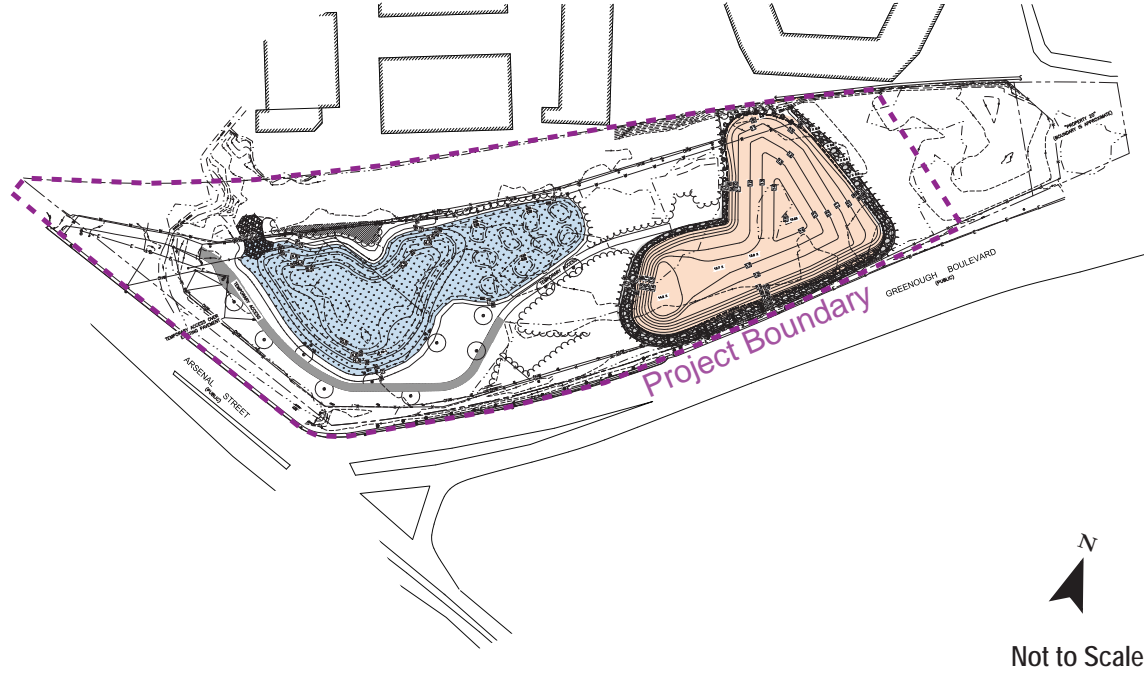
USACE also constructed new wetlands to replace the historic wetlands altered by the soil mound.



# SITE PLAN before & after remediation

## Before Remediation

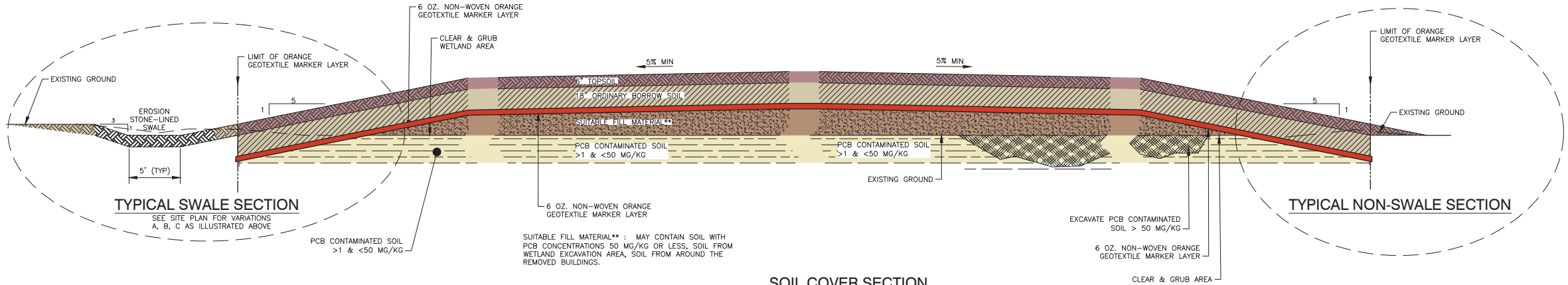


## After Remediation



- Constructed Wetland 
- Soil Mound 

# SOIL MOUND soil cover section



**TYPICAL SWALE SECTION**  
SEE SITE PLAN FOR VARIATIONS  
A, B, C AS ILLUSTRATED ABOVE

**TYPICAL NON-SWALE SECTION**

**SOIL COVER SECTION**  
NOT TO SCALE

## 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
- Biking and motorized vehicles on paved surfaces
- Non-intrusive maintenance like mowing, raking, or trimming

# SITE PLAN site limitations



## 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
- Skiing or sledding

# 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

- Nature-based design for stormwater management, including evaluating the performative and aesthetic qualities related to bank stabilization requirements of Sawins Brook
- 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



# SITE ANALYSIS context plan



Watertown-Cambridge Greenway

Arsenal Park

Watertown

West  
Cambridge

Hobart Park

Filippello Park

Newton Corner

Parking Area on Greenough Blvd

SITE

Mount Auburn  
Cemetery

Approx. 1/2 mile radius

Dr. Paul Dudley White Bike Path

Dr. Paul Dudley White Bike Path

McKinney Park

BB&N Frank Field

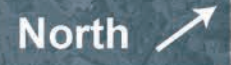
Cambridge  
Cemetery

Portsmouth Street Playground

Christian A. Herter Park

Brighton


Lower Allston









# SITE ANALYSIS

## existing circulation

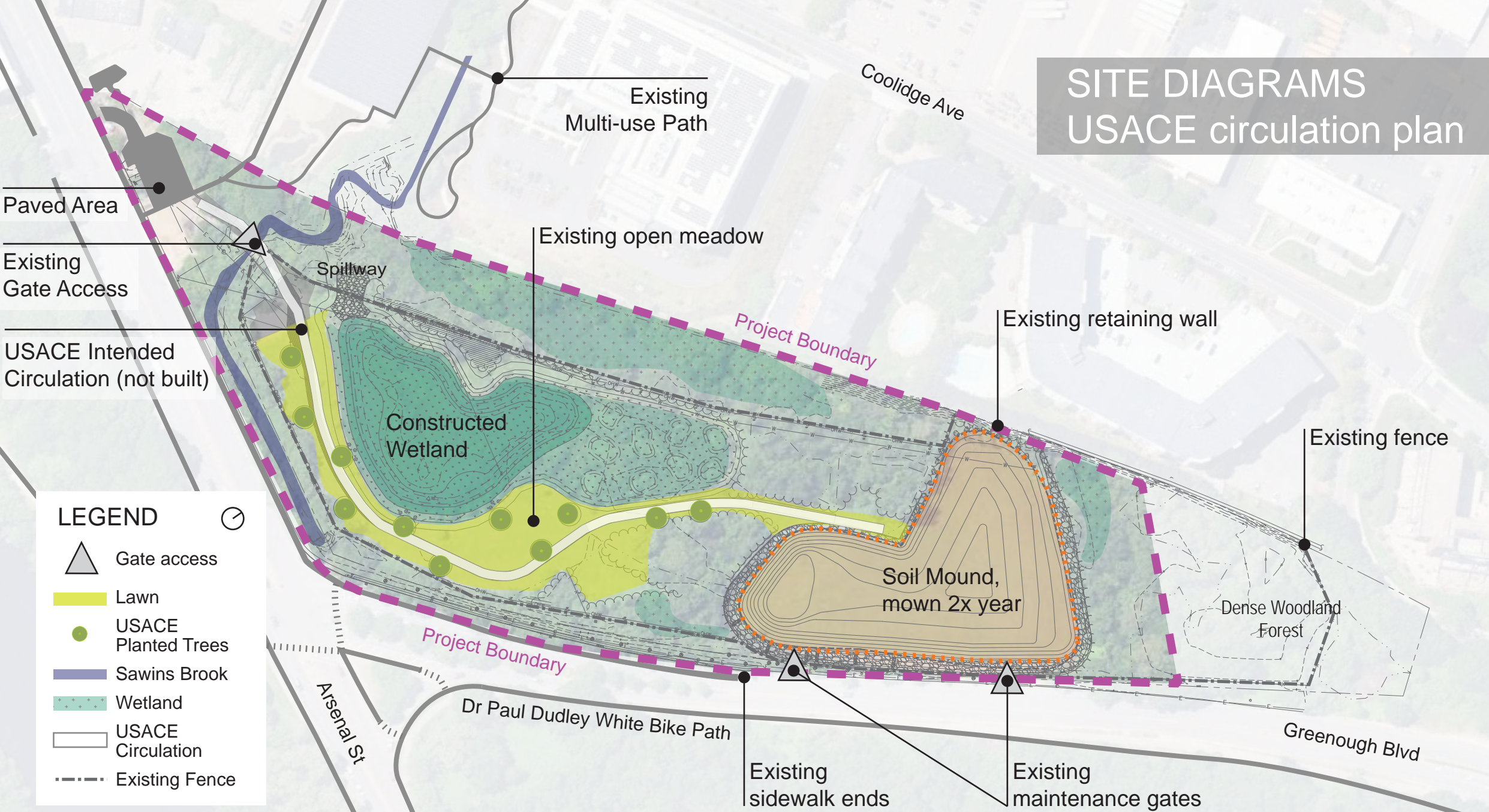


**LEGEND** 








-  Pedestrian Circulation
-  Bike Circulation
-  Mixed Use Development
-  Residential Development
-  Commercial Use
-  Existing Parking/  
Opportunity Site Parking

# SITE DIAGRAMS

## USACE circulation plan




### LEGEND







-  Gate access
-  Lawn
-  USACE Planted Trees
-  Sawins Brook
-  Wetland
-  USACE Circulation
-  Existing Fence

# SITE ANALYSIS

## site opportunities

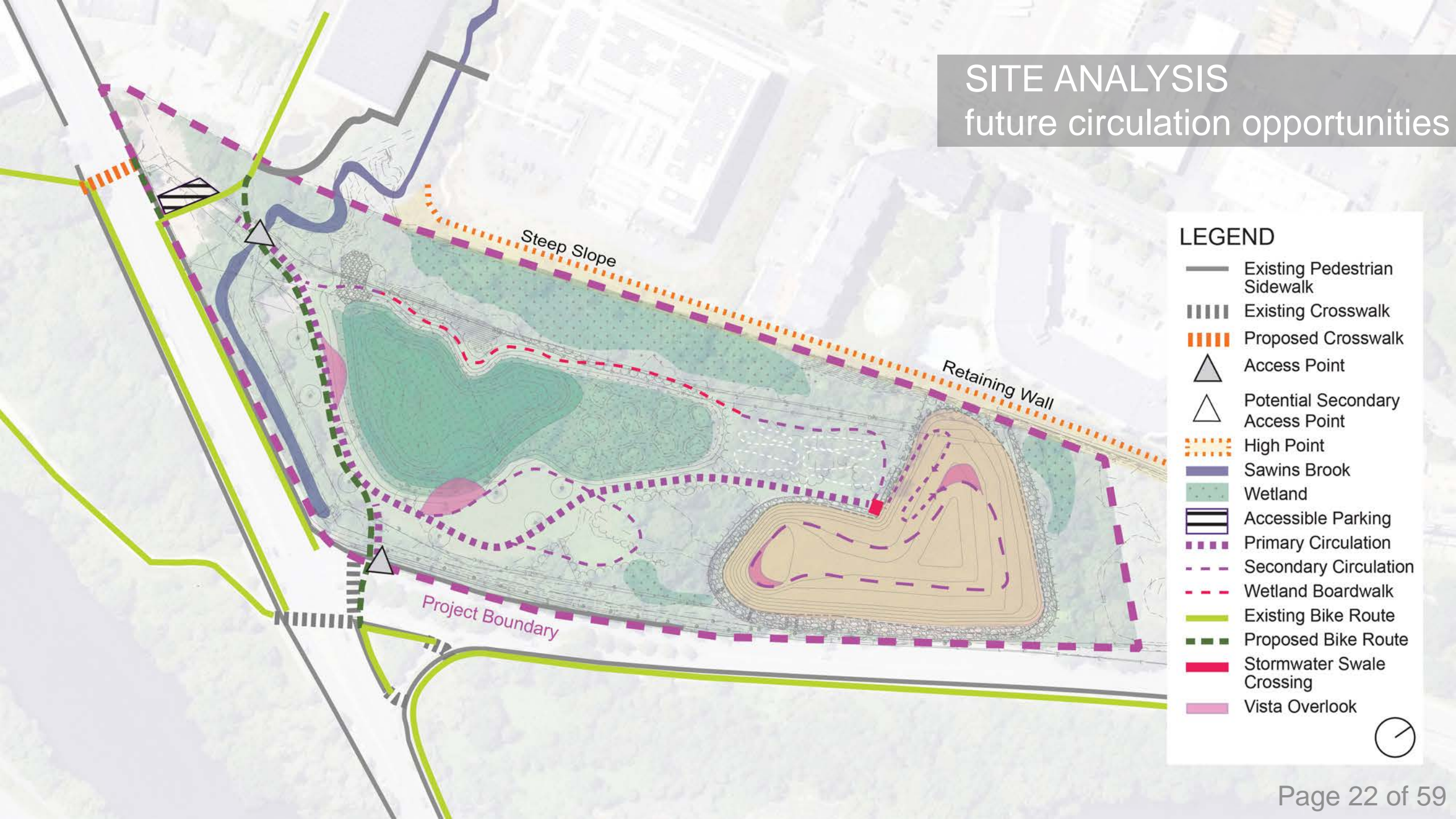


**LEGEND** 

-  Sawins Brook
-  Open Space
-  Vista Moments
-  Thresholds
-  Sensory
-  Forest Canopy

# SITE ANALYSIS

## future circulation opportunities

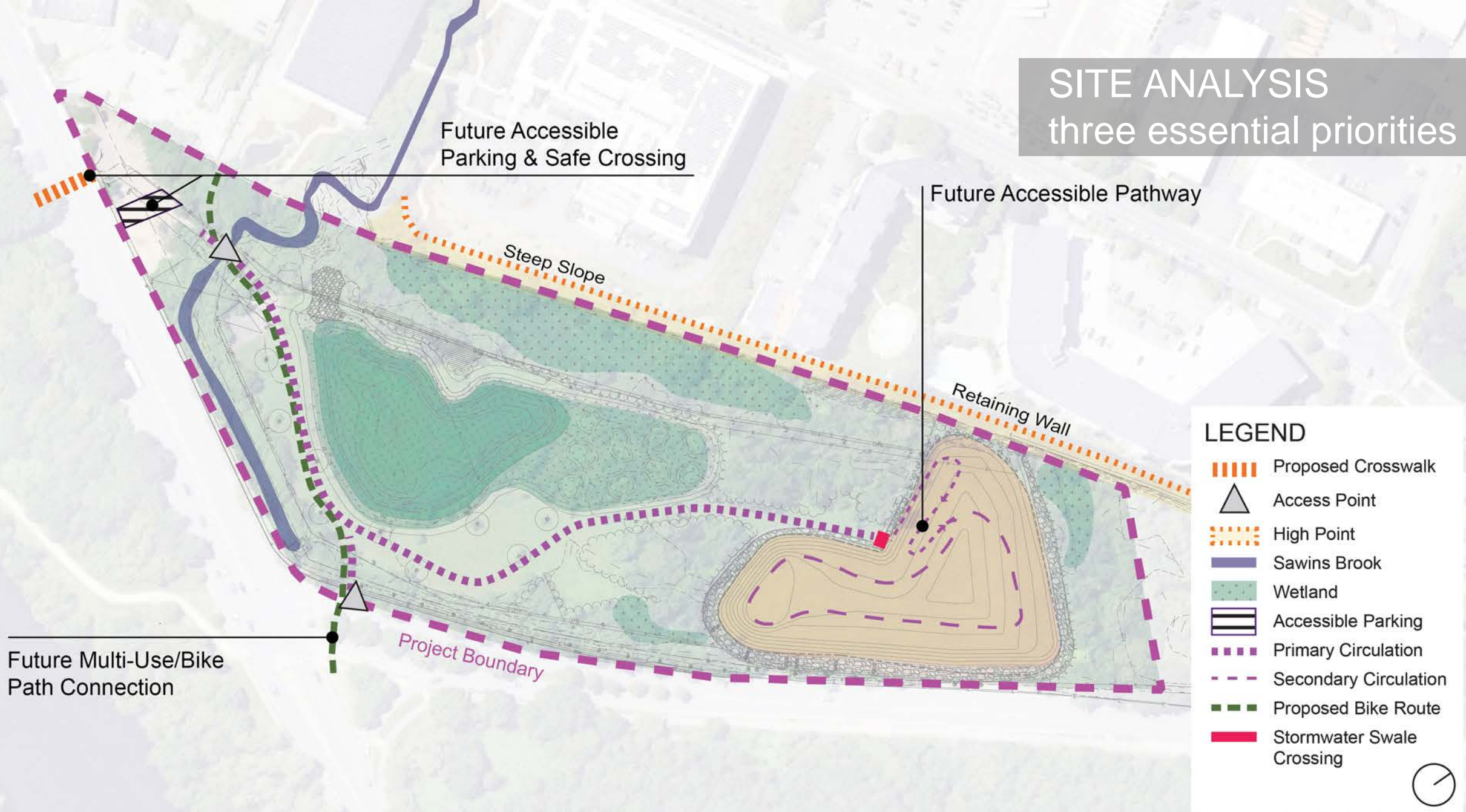


- ### LEGEND
- Existing Pedestrian Sidewalk
  - Existing Crosswalk
  - Proposed Crosswalk
  - Access Point
  - Potential Secondary Access Point
  - High Point
  - Sawins Brook
  - Wetland
  - Accessible Parking
  - Primary Circulation
  - Secondary Circulation
  - Wetland Boardwalk
  - Existing Bike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



# SITE ANALYSIS

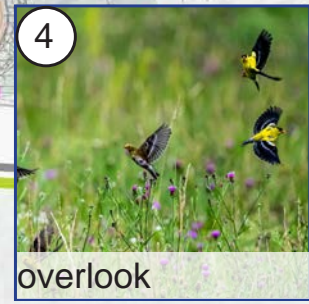
three essential priorities



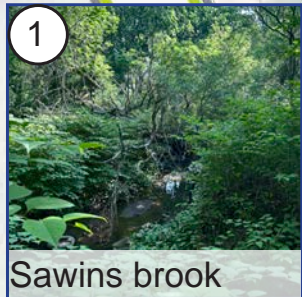
# Conceptual Themes

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

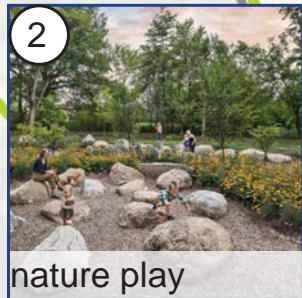
# NATURE WALK (ecological connections)



# SENSORY STROLL (the human experience)



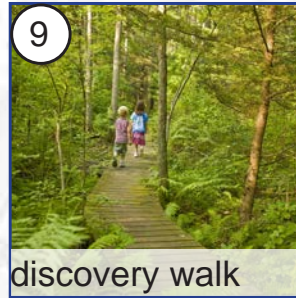
Sawins brook



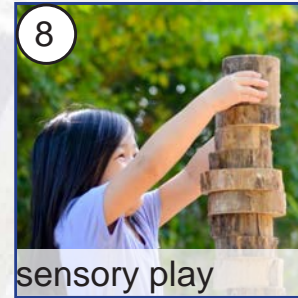
nature play



colors of nature



discovery walk



sensory play



vista point



whispering winds



sounds of nature

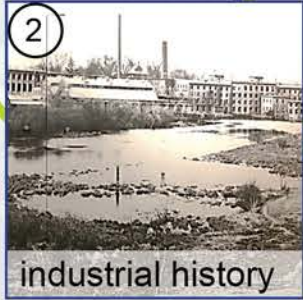


passive lawn



# TRANSFORMATION STORY

(healing the landscape)



# COMMUNITY FEEDBACK

**Plant natives &  
restore  
Sawins Brook**  
9 comments

**Bike path  
connection &  
looped trails**  
9 comments

**Fund long-term  
upkeep &  
remediation**  
4 comments

**Improve  
Arsenal St.  
crossing**  
2 comments

**Site history,  
lightly told**  
4 comments

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*I really like the features that you're considering for this park. Prioritizing the multi-use/bike path connection and the safe street crossing are most important to me. My family would also get a lot of enjoyment out of the sensory stroll. (I have three school-aged children.)*

— Watertown resident

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*Educational information on the history of the site should be available to visitors, but not overwhelming the natural environment.*

— Watertown resident

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*We strongly support your proposed improvements to the former GSA site in Watertown, particularly your inclusion of a bicycle connection between the Charles River and Coolidge Avenue. This is a critical link to support neighborhood mobility. In addition, we also support the addition of a Discovery Walk, which functions as a return route for walkers exploring the site. This is far superior to a single, out-and-back path, as it allows walkers to explore a second ecosystem within the site.*

— Friends of the Watertown-Cambridge Greenway

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*For Watertown sites with an industrial past, we have found that they can be enhanced through interactive signs about the history, without it being a huge focus.*

— City of Watertown

# Schematic Design

1. Site Plan and Enlargements
2. Precedent Imagery

# SCHEMATIC DESIGN SITE PLAN



Sawins Brook

Park Entry

Gateway/Entrance

Accessible Wetland Trail

Accessible Wetland Boardwalk

Woodland Duff Trail

Accessible Woodland Walk

The Soil Mound

Accessible Multi-Use Trail

Constructed Wetland

Accessible Walking Trail

Mown Path

Lawn

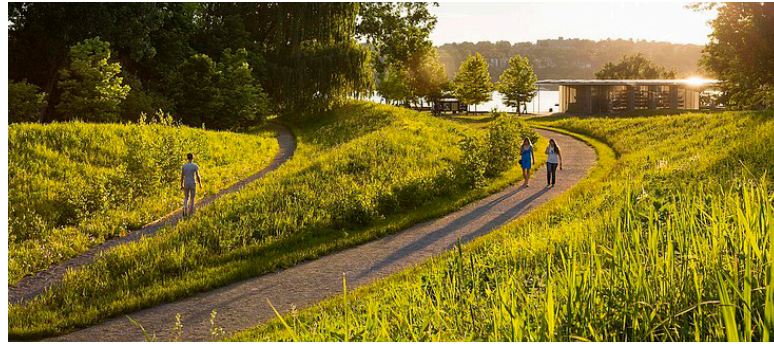
Meadow

Gateway/Entrance





**Accessible Multi-Use Trail**



**Accessible Walking Trail**



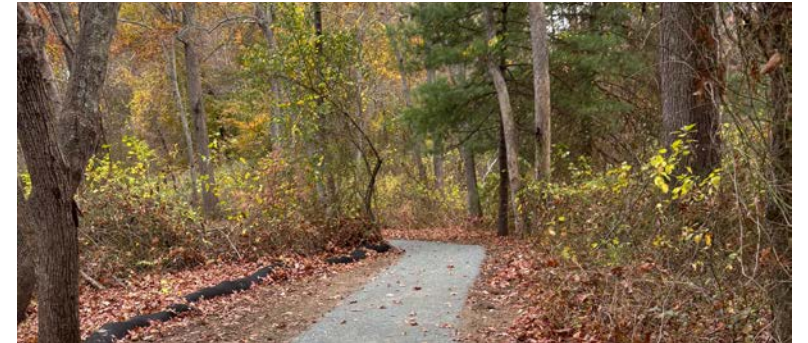
**Lawn**



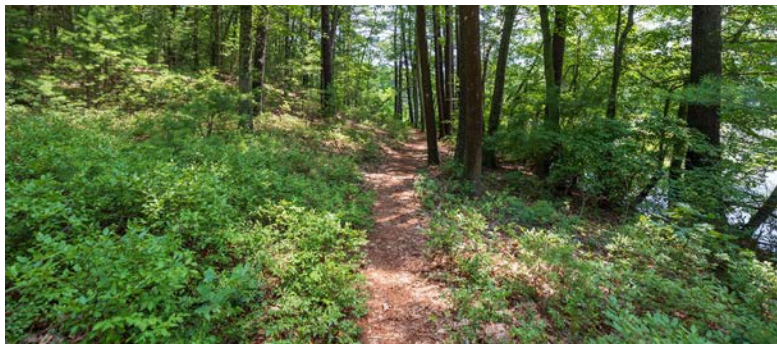
**Meadow**



**Mown Path**



**Accessible Woodland Walk**



**Woodland Duff Path**



**Accessible Wetland Boardwalk**



**Accessible Wetland Trail**



Schurcliff Bench



SCHEMATIC DESIGN  
SITE AMENITIES

Picnic Table



Welcome Signage



Wayfinding Markers



Interpretive Signage

ENTRY EXPERIENCE  
EXISTING CONDITIONS



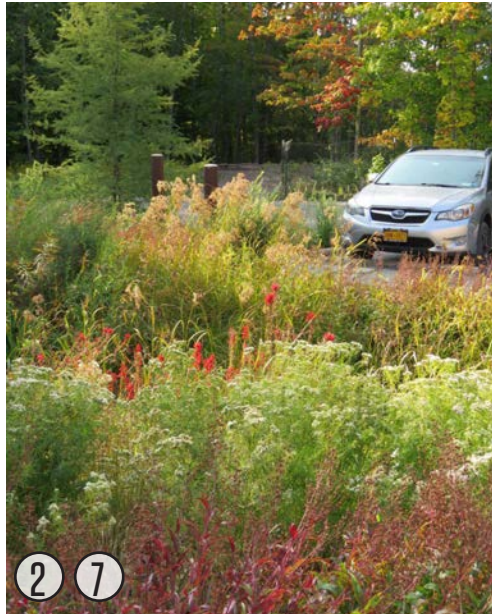
Focus Area

# ENTRY EXPERIENCE PROPOSED DESIGN

## Legend

- ① One-Way Drive Aisle
- ② Accessible Parking
- ③ Maintenance Pull Off
- ④ Pedestrian Path
- ⑤ Entry Plaza
- ⑥ Multi-use Trail
- ⑦ Rain Garden
- ⑧ Vegetated Buffer
- ? Informational Graphics
- ➔ Signage and Wayfinding
- ☕ Seating and Tables
- 🌀 Sensory Experience





MEADOWS + WETLANDS  
EXISTING CONDITIONS



Focus Area

# MEADOWS + WETLANDS PROPOSED DESIGN

## Legend

- ① Accessible Multi-use Trail
- ② Accessible Walking Path
- ③ Mown Path
- ④ Duff Path
- ⑤ Accessible Boardwalk
- ⑥ Accessible Wetland Walk
- ⑦ Picnic Table
- ⑧ Bench
- ? Informational Graphics
- ➡ Signage and Wayfinding
- ↻ Sensory Experience

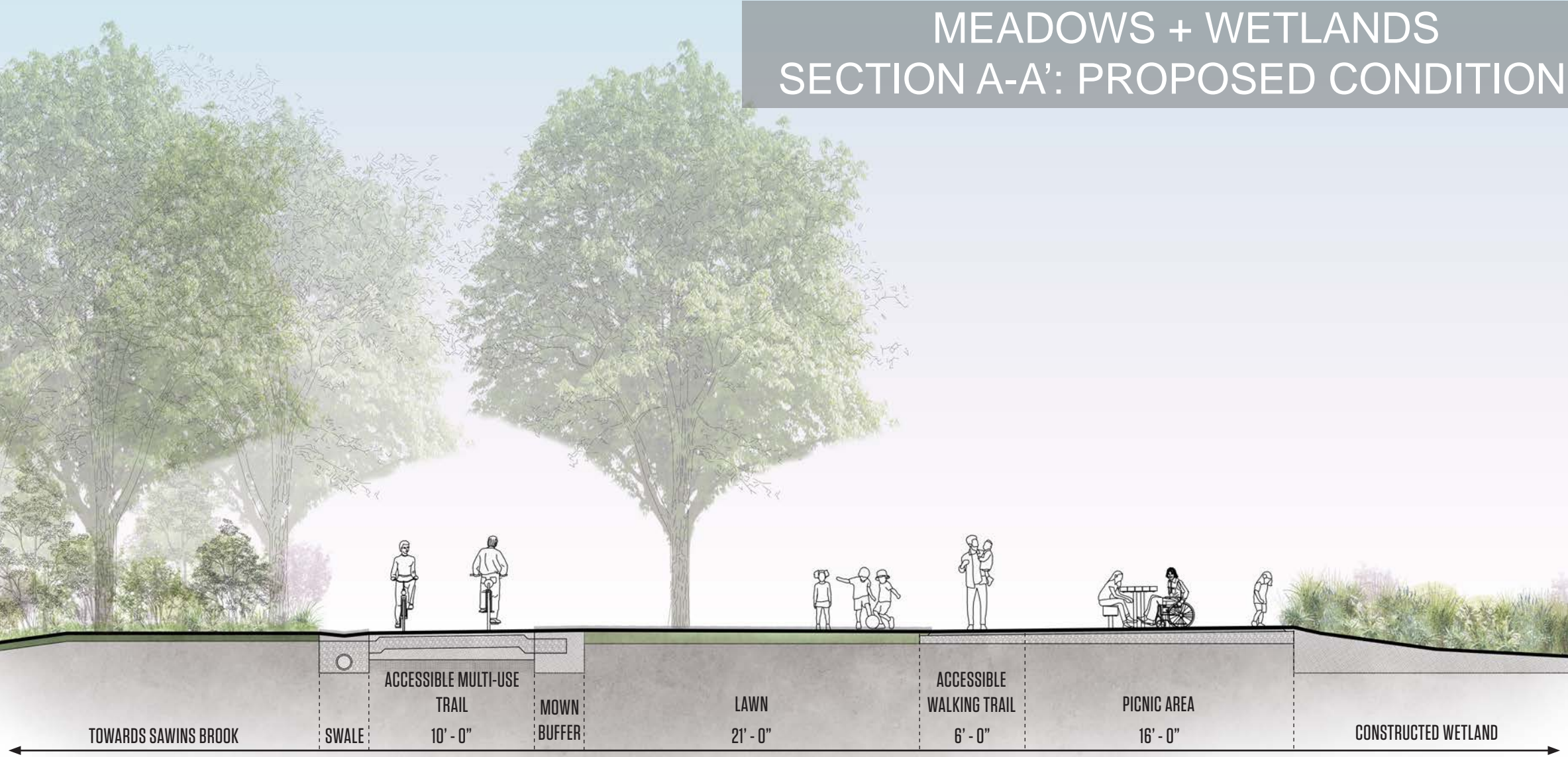


# MEADOWS + WETLANDS SECTION A-A': EXISTING CONDITIONS



Section Location

# MEADOWS + WETLANDS SECTION A-A': PROPOSED CONDITIONS



**SECTION A-A': MULTI-USE TRAIL TO CONSTRUCTED WETLAND**

# MEADOWS + WETLANDS SECTIONS B-B' + C-C': EXISTING CONDITIONS



**SECTION B-B': WETLAND WALK**

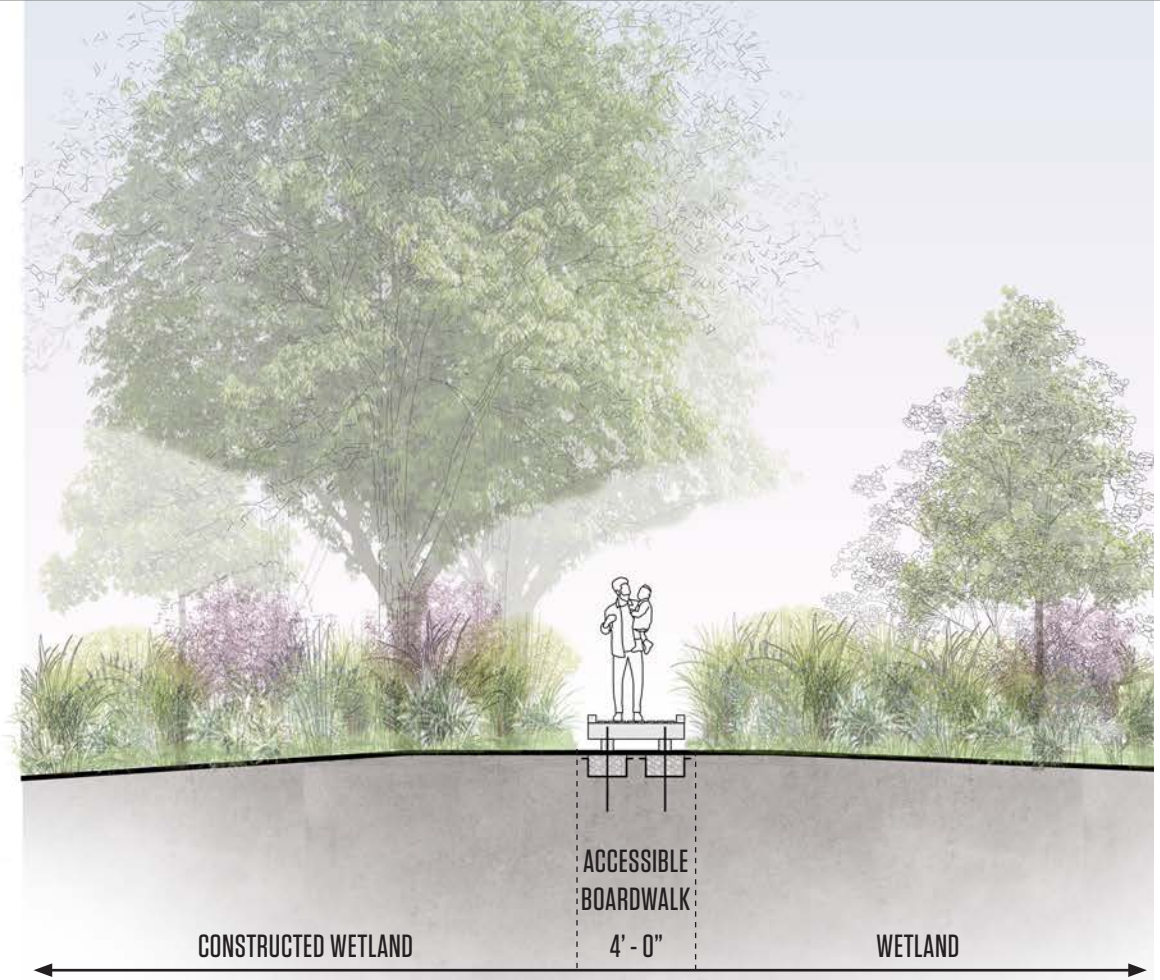
**SECTION C-C': BOARDWALK**

**Section Locations**

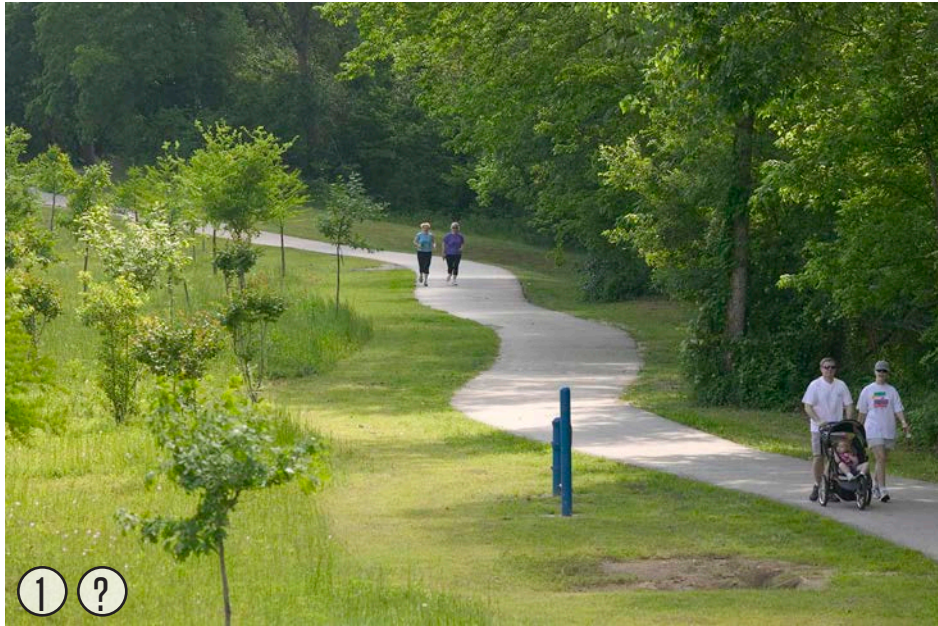
# MEADOWS + WETLANDS SECTIONS B-B' + C-C': PROPOSED CONDITIONS



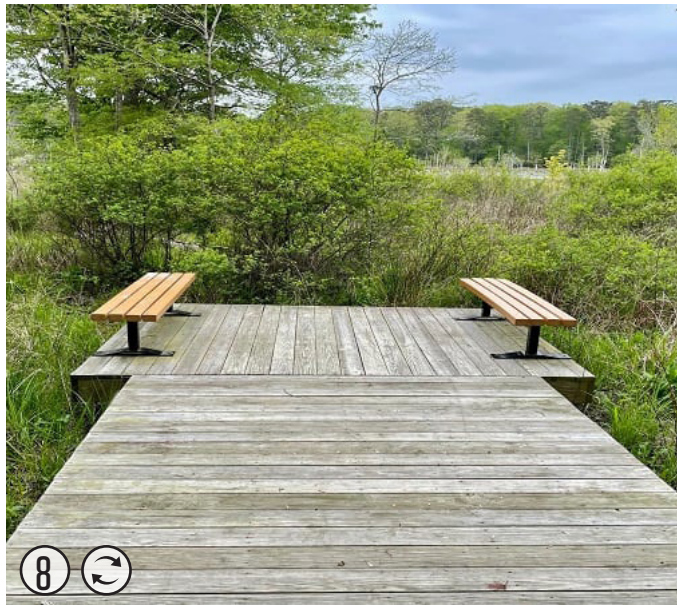
**SECTION B-B': WETLAND WALK**



**SECTION C-C': BOARDWALK**



# MEADOWS + WETLANDS SITE QUALITIES



THE SOIL MOUND  
EXISTING CONDITIONS



Focus Area

# THE SOIL MOUND PROPOSED DESIGN



## Legend

- ① Accessible Multi-use Trail
- ② Accessible Walking Path
- ③ Mown Path
- ④ Duff Path
- ⑤ Accessible Boardwalk
- ⑥ Accessible Wetland Walk
- ⑦ Picnic Table
- ⑧ Bench
- ? Informational Graphics
- ➔ Signage and Wayfinding
- ↻ Sensory Experience

# THE SOIL MOUND SECTION D-D': EXISTING CONDITIONS



Section Location

# THE SOIL MOUND SECTION D-D': PROPOSED DESIGN



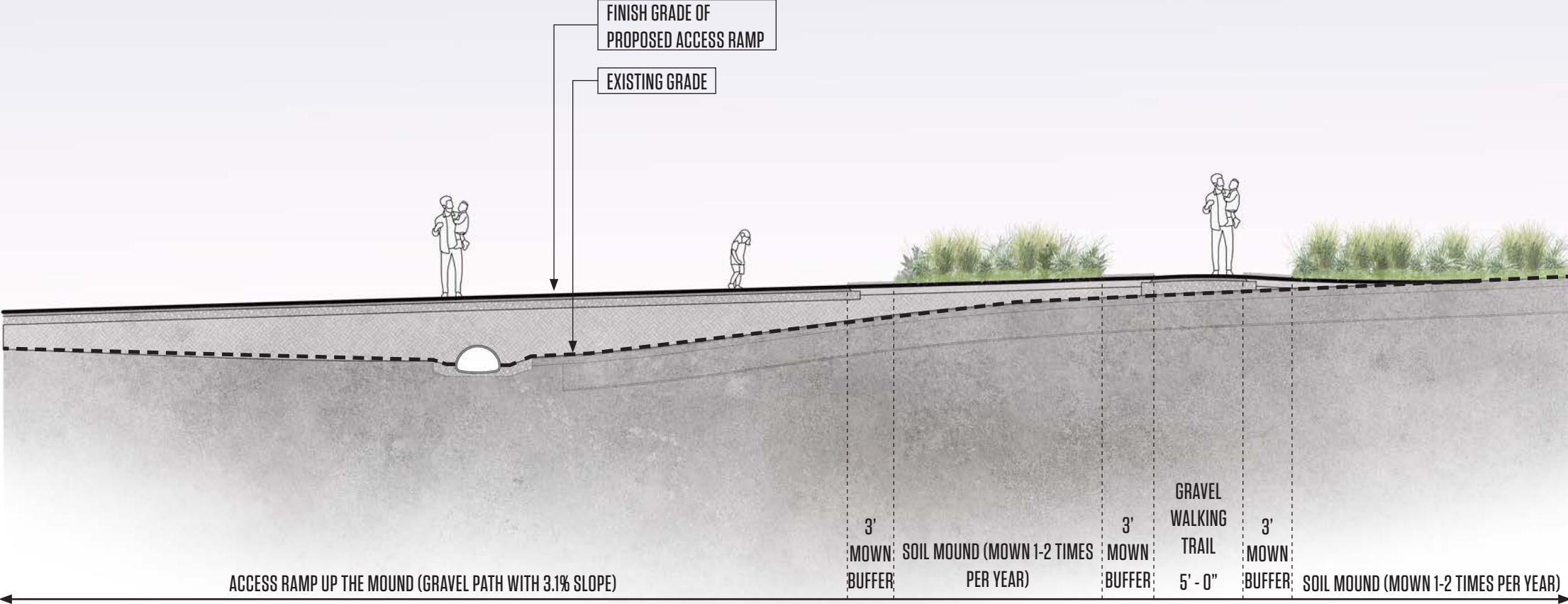
**SECTION D-D': PATH AROUND THE SOIL MOUND**

# THE SOIL MOUND SECTION E-E': EXISTING CONDITIONS

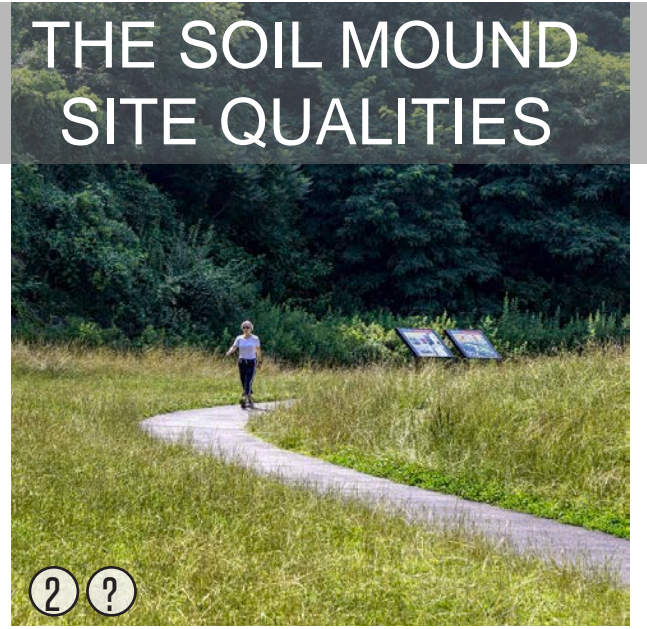
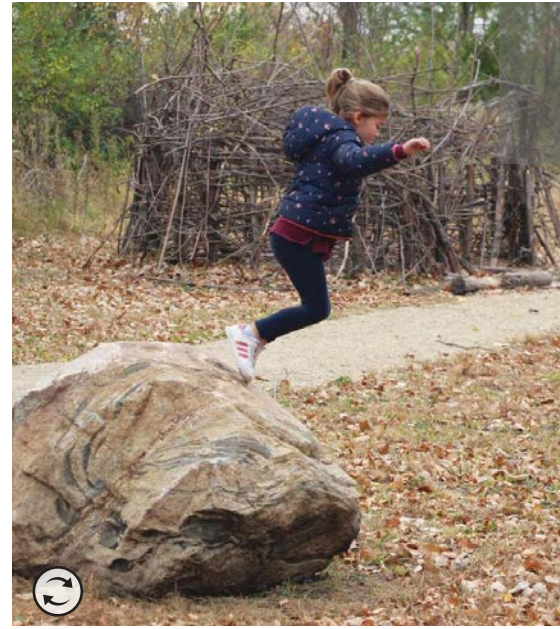


Section Location

# THE SOIL MOUND SECTION E-E': PROPOSED DESIGN

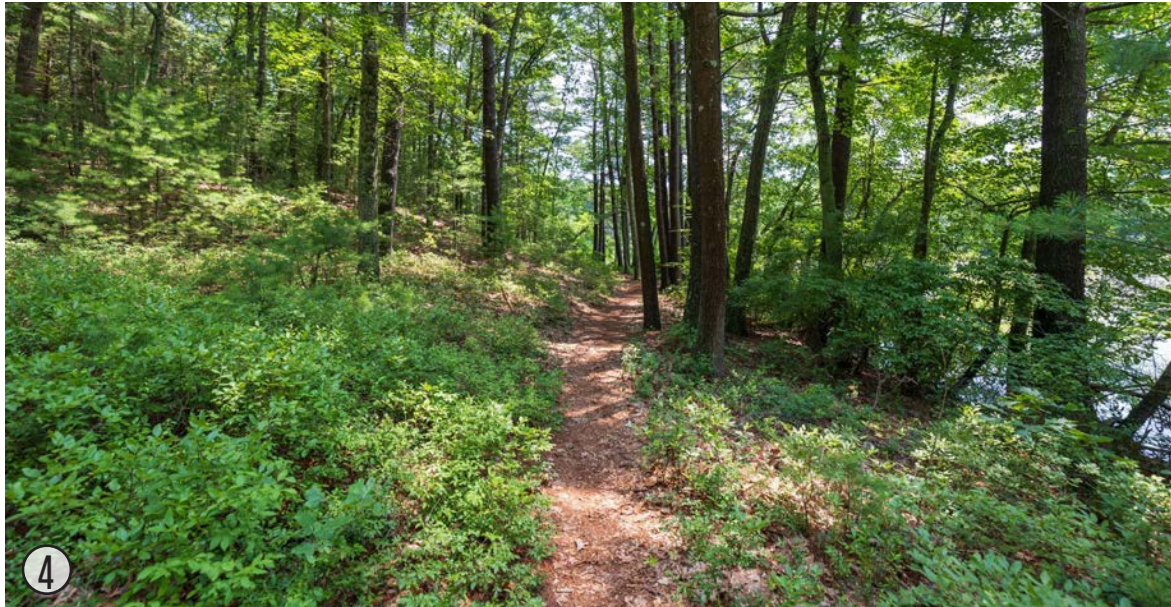


SECTION E-E': PATH UP TO THE SOIL MOUND





# WOODLAND WALK SITE QUALITIES



# Land Stewardship

1. Invasive Species Management
2. Planting Strategy

A photograph showing a dense thicket of green plants, likely an invasive species, growing along a stream in a wooded area. The plants have large, rounded, bright green leaves. The stream is visible on the right side of the image, with rocks and fallen branches in the water. The background is filled with more green foliage and trees.

INVASIVES REMOVAL  
AT PRIORITY LOCATIONS

A photograph of a healthy native woodland. The scene is filled with numerous tall, slender trees with light-colored bark and dense green foliage. The ground is covered in a thick layer of green grass and other vegetation, including some large, broad-leafed plants in the foreground. The lighting is bright, suggesting a sunny day, with dappled sunlight filtering through the canopy.

MAINTAIN EXISTING HEALTHY  
NATIVE WOODLAND

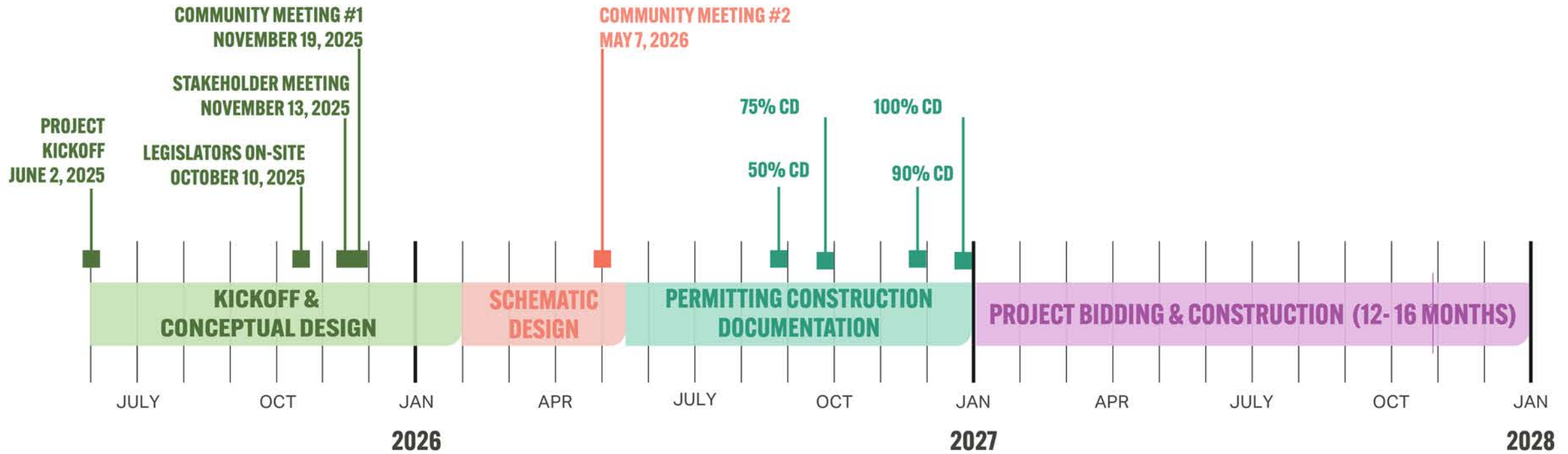
A photograph of a diverse meadow. The foreground is filled with various plants, including tall grasses with feathery seed heads, clusters of bright yellow flowers, and some brown, dried seed heads. The middle ground shows a dense field of similar vegetation, extending to a flat horizon under a clear, light blue sky. The overall scene is a lush, natural landscape.

INCREASE BIODIVERSITY WITH  
MEADOW PLANTINGS

# Next Steps

1. Project Timeline
2. Questions & Comments

# Project Timeline



What we'll be focusing on:

Working with you and our team to set a vision and design direction	Refining the Vision	Figuring out all the details, and developing the technical documents to get the project bid	Getting the project built! (subject to funding)
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# Questions & Comments?



# Additional Information

- Recording and tonight's slide deck will be available at:
  - [www.mass.gov/dcr/past-public-meetings](http://www.mass.gov/dcr/past-public-meetings)
- If you have comments on this project:
  - *Submit online:* [www.mass.gov/dcr/public-comment](http://www.mass.gov/dcr/public-comment)
  - *Deadline: Thursday, May 21st, 2026*  
*Please note: 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](mailto:mass.parks@mass.gov)



# Thank You.



The Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) cares for nearly half a million acres of public lands, nurturing the vital connection between people and nature while keeping these shared spaces welcoming and accessible to all.