

# Bluebonnet Swamp Conservation Area

## Vision Workshop

April 18, 2024



DESIGNWORKSHOP





# Project Schedule

**WE ARE HERE**

## Engagement Window #1

Values Workshop  
w/ Stakeholders  
Online Survey

## Conceptual Design Alternatives

## Engagement Window #2

Public Vision  
Workshop  
Public Survey

## Final Concept Design

## NEXT STEPS:

Fundraising

Design Documentation

Phased Construction

# Project Vision

The Bluebonnet Swamp vision plan will set the stage for the creation of a variety of experiences that will translate the ecological narrative **connecting people to this place**. Utilizing stakeholder and community engagement, the Vision Plan will **mitigate environmental and economic challenges** that the swamp currently faces, while building a road map for the **evolution of the Bluebonnet Swamp**.

# Project Goals

## Ecology



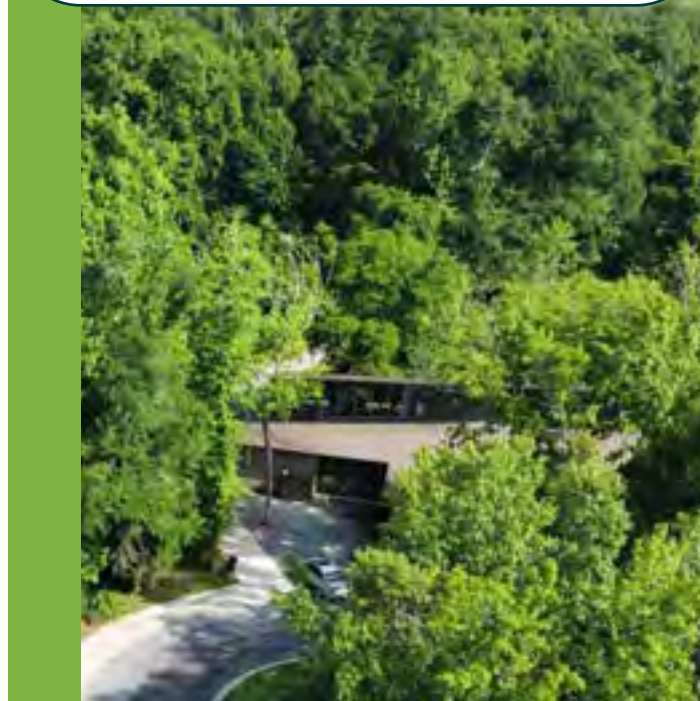
Foster an authentic landscape that brings the site to its full ecological and cultural potential.



## Beauty



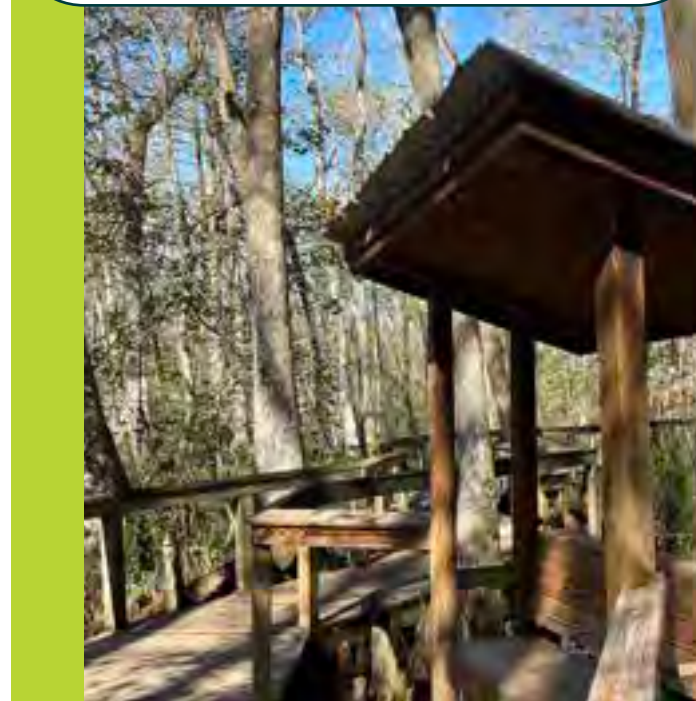
Create a symbiosis between revenue generating program spaces and the swamp's beauty and character.



## Education



Embrace educational programming and interpretive opportunities.



## Growth



Build a framework that can accommodate future growth and meets the community's needs.







# INVENTORY + ANALYSIS

ANALYSIS



# Context

REGION



**Native Settlement**  
8000 BC to 1709



**Agricultural Dominance**  
1708 - 1865

Levee System develops



**Industrialization**  
1865 - 1970s

1928 Flood Control Act authorized higher levee grades and stronger levee sections.

1927



**Recover and Protection**  
1970s to Present

SITE

1700s

PHASE 1:

## Pre settlement Phase

Small Bayou with willow trees and buttonbush shrubs

Ponding due to natural processes

Pristine environment

1800s

PHASE 2:

## Agricultural Phase

Plantations along Bayou Fountain In 1852



1900s

PHASE 3:

## Suburbanization Phase

Intensive urban development intruding the swamp



1985

Land Preservation Plan

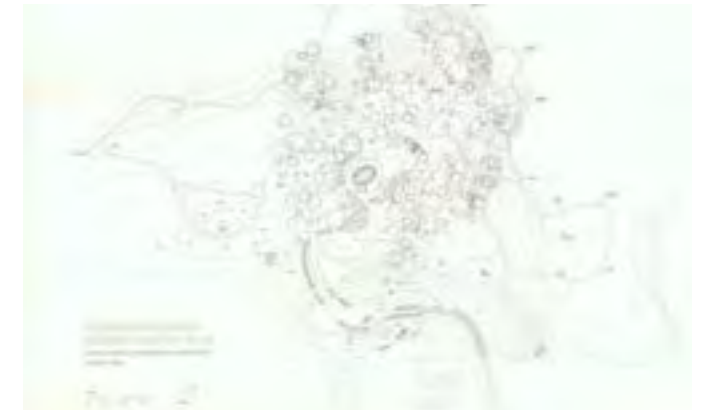
1998

Land Management and Design Intent Plan

2010

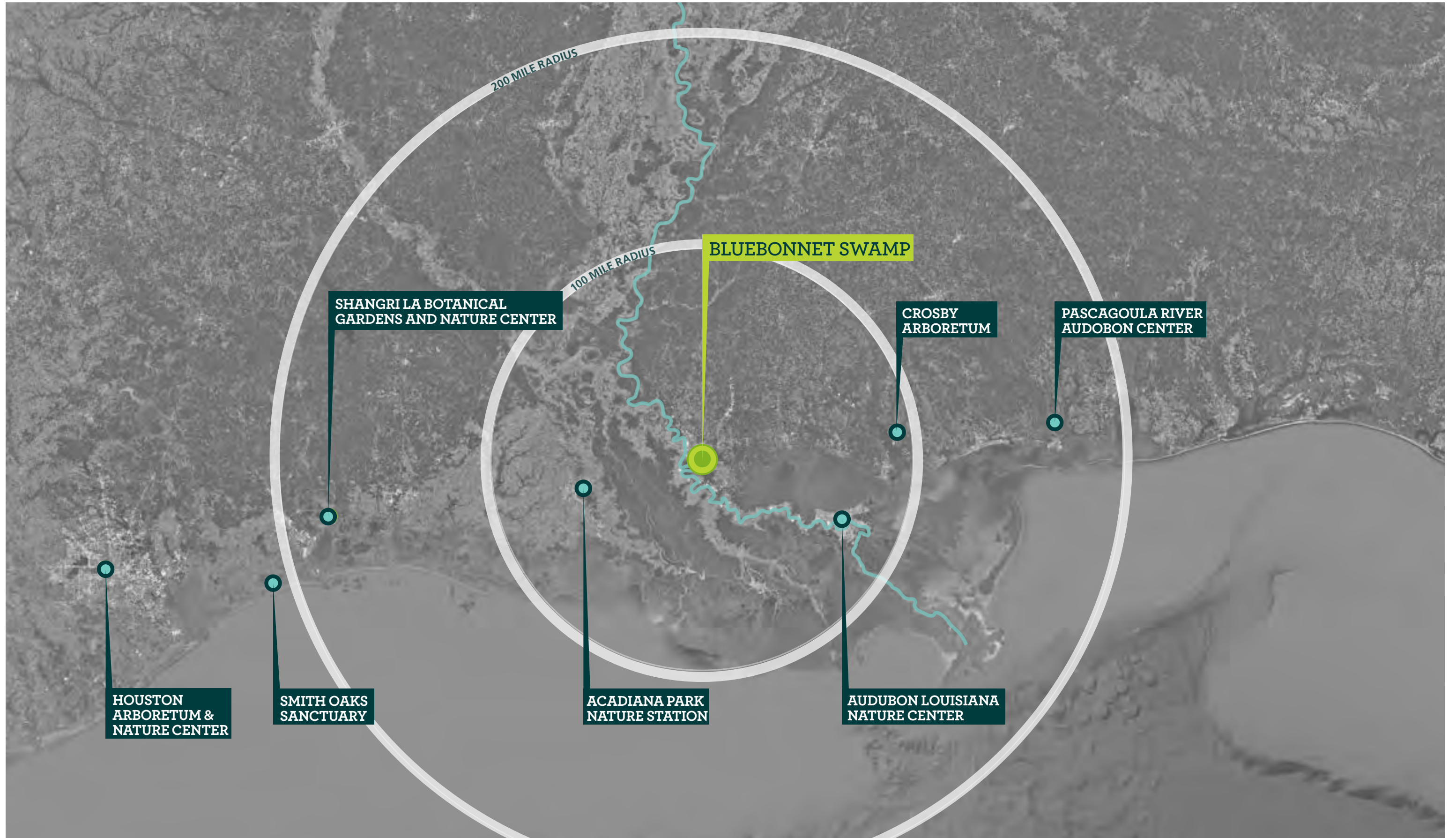
Interpretive Plan

1995 Concept Master Plan



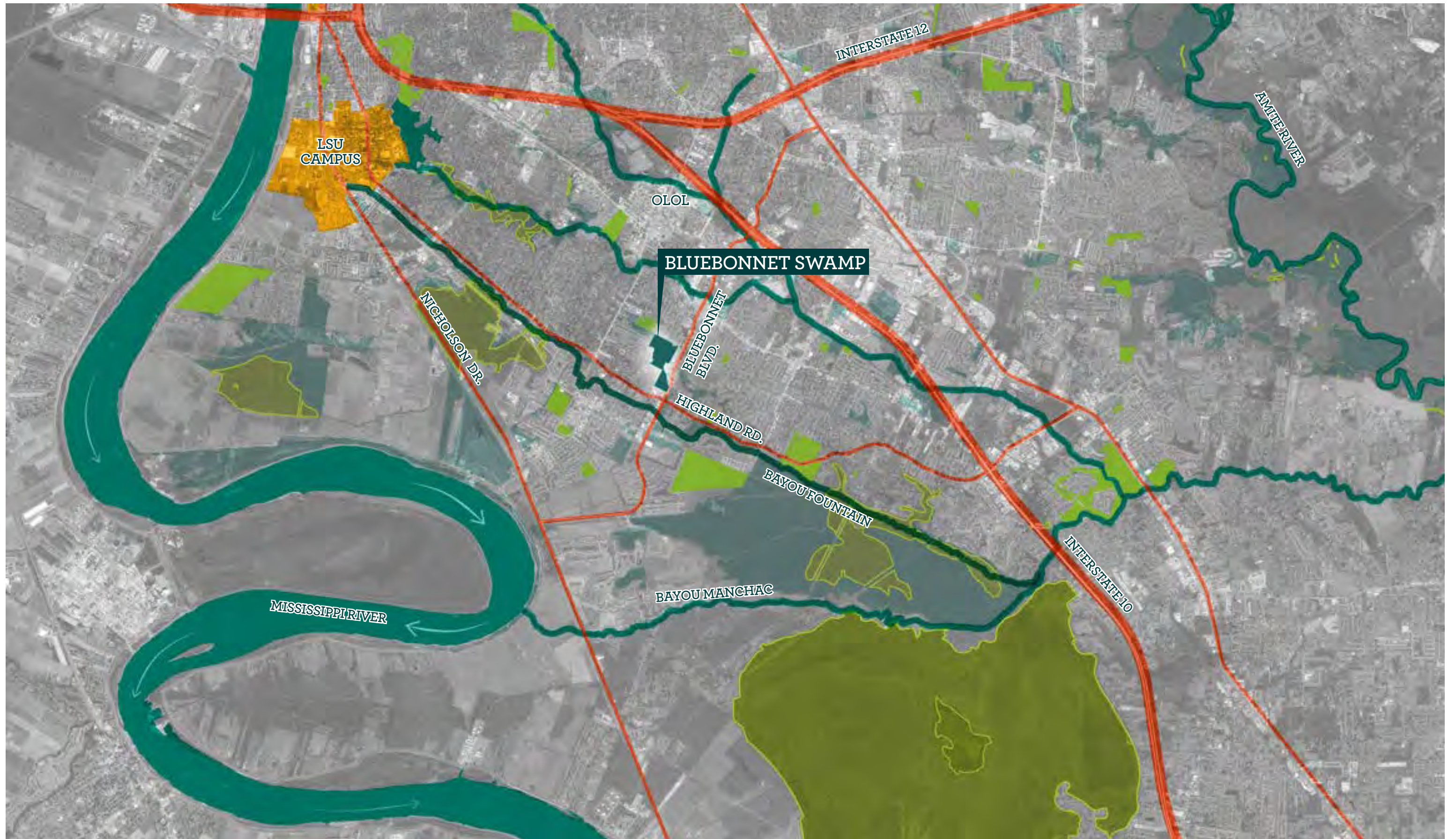


# Regional Context





# Local Context





# Bluebonnet Swamp Current Conditions

- 103 acre
- 5 acre entry area
- 1.1 miles of trail
- 110 parking spaces
- 86% of site is wetland
- 35% of site is swamp
- 4-12% slope along edges
- Increasing levels of sediment within the swamp





# Opportunities and Constraints



**Opportunity** Unique swamp condition in the heart of Baton Rouge.

**Constraint** Water levels are decreasing in the swamp due to sediment from development in the watershed.



**Opportunity** Trail network that gets visitors a chance to experience nature.

**Constraint** Trails currently only reach the edge of the swamp, capturing a fraction of this beautiful site.



**Opportunity** This is a place where people come to learn more about the ecologies of southern Louisiana.

**Constraint** Along the trails, there are few spaces that can accommodate areas for larger groups to learn.



**Opportunity** Distinct architectural character is established with the Interpretive Center.

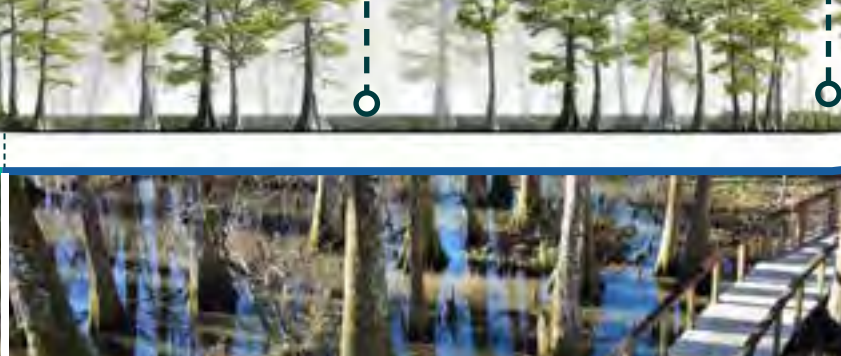
**Constraint** Facilities in their current state cannot balance the desire for private events during the day.



**UPLAND**



**SLOPE**  
Escarpment + Transition Zone



**SWAMP**



**SLOPE**  
Escarpment + Transition Zone



**UPLAND**





# Precedent Projects

## Smith Oaks Sanctuary



- 130 Acres
- 1.8 Miles of trails
- 0% Active programming

## Shangri-La Botanical Gardens



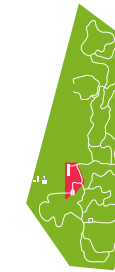
- 252 Acres
- 2.91 Miles of trails
- 5% Programmed space

## Houston Arboretum & Nature Center



- 155 Acres
- 4.3 Miles of trails
- 3% Programmed space

## Crosby Arboretum



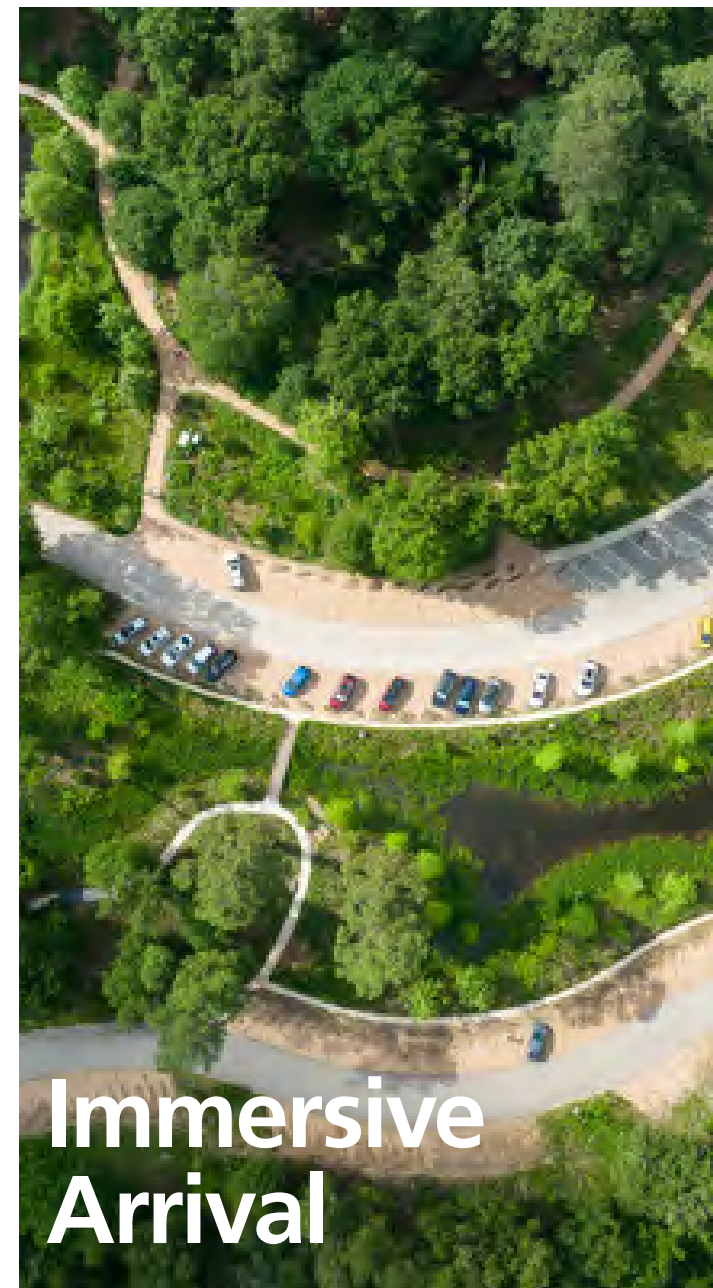
- 70 Acres
- 3.1 Miles of trails
- 15% Programmed space



**Diverse Trail Experiences**



**Educational Infrastructure**



**Immersive Arrival**



**Scenic Event Spaces**



# Stakeholder and Public Feedback

## Stakeholder Meetings

- Three stakeholder groups engaged: Bluebonnet Founders, EBR Parish Civic organizations, and nature and ecological organizations
- Stakeholders help shape the values for the vision plan.

## Online Survey

- Over 140 survey responses were collected.
- Participants answered a series of 19 questions.

## Community Workshop

- Public Workshop to help shape the vision of the plan - deciding programming and location of site elements.





# What We Heard

## Preferred Strategies



### Ecology

- Create habitats for endangered, threatened and indicator species within Bluebonnet Swamp
- Enhance the biodiversity within Bluebonnet Swamp
- Implement demonstration and teaching gardens



### Beauty

- Use of signage and wayfinding that encourage exploration and enhances the experience of the trails
- Develop more passive programming like trails, observation decks and bird blinds
- Develop active programming like event spaces, nature play and outdoor classrooms



### Education

- Provide an on-site lab where classes, demonstrations and research could occur
- Create quality interactive exhibits inside the Interpretive Center
- Offer guided site tours that explore more areas outside of the formalized trail system.



### Growth

- Develop a sustainable maintenance plan to support the needs of Bluebonnet Swamp
- Establish a foundation or friends of group for the Bluebonnet Swamp to provide financial and operational support
- Create a direct connection between Bluebonnet Swamp and future regional trail and waterway systems

## Identified Programming



CANOPY WALK



TREEHOUSE



ELEVATED LOOKOUT



BOARDWALK



OBSERVATION TOWER



EXPLORATION GARDEN



TREE TOP PLAY



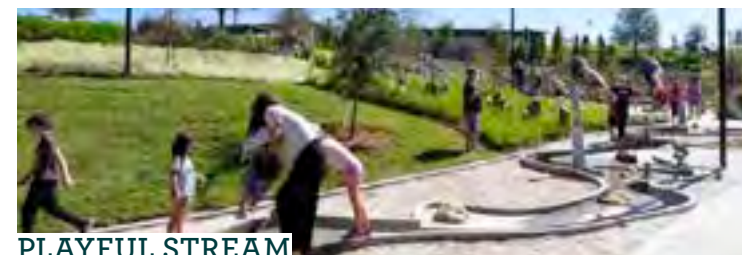
EDUCATIONAL GARDEN



FLOATING BOARDWALK



VIEWING POCKET



PLAYFUL STREAM



SEATING POCKET



# What We Heard

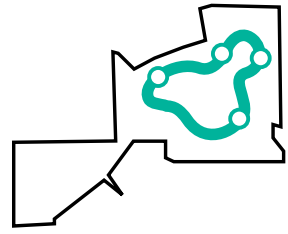


## LEGEND

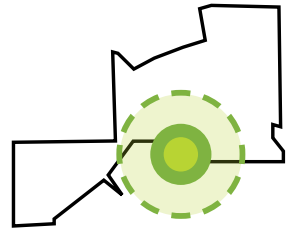
- Staff Comments
- Stakeholder Comments
- Public Comments
- Shared Comments



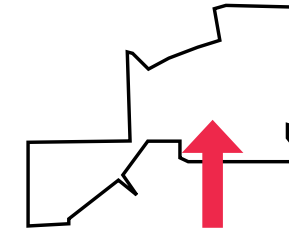
# Prioritization of Feedback



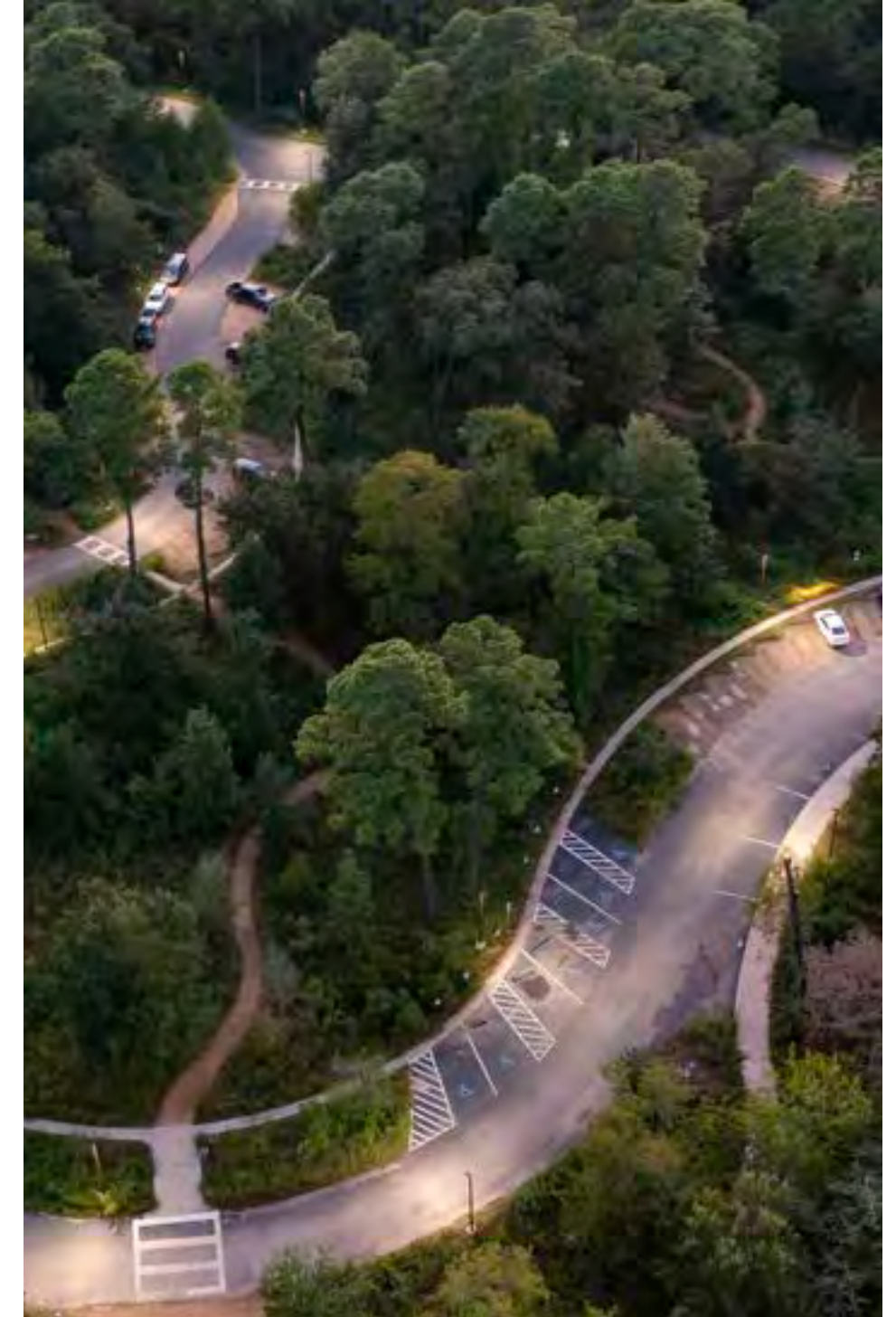
1 Landscape Experience



2 Educational Expansion



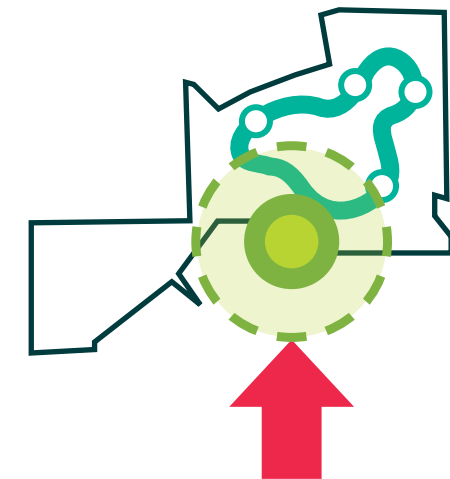
3 Arrival & Wayfinding





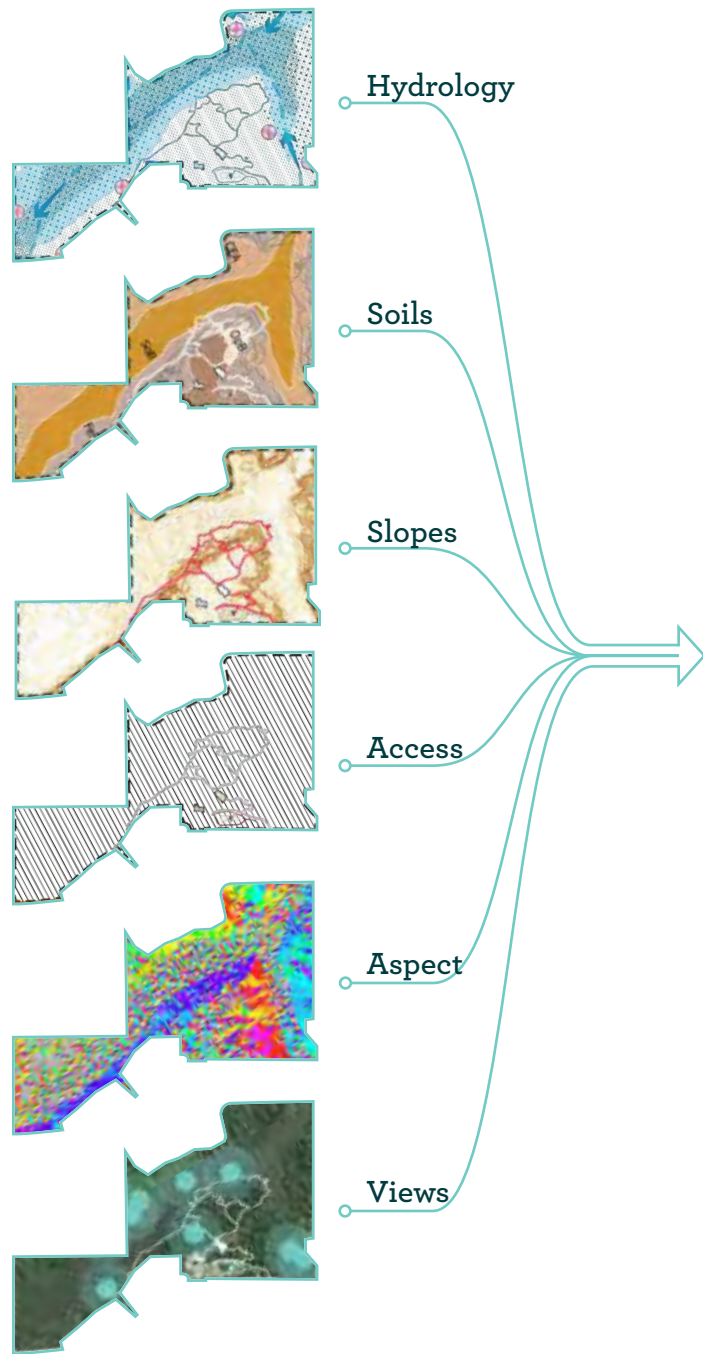


# DESIGN STRATEGY



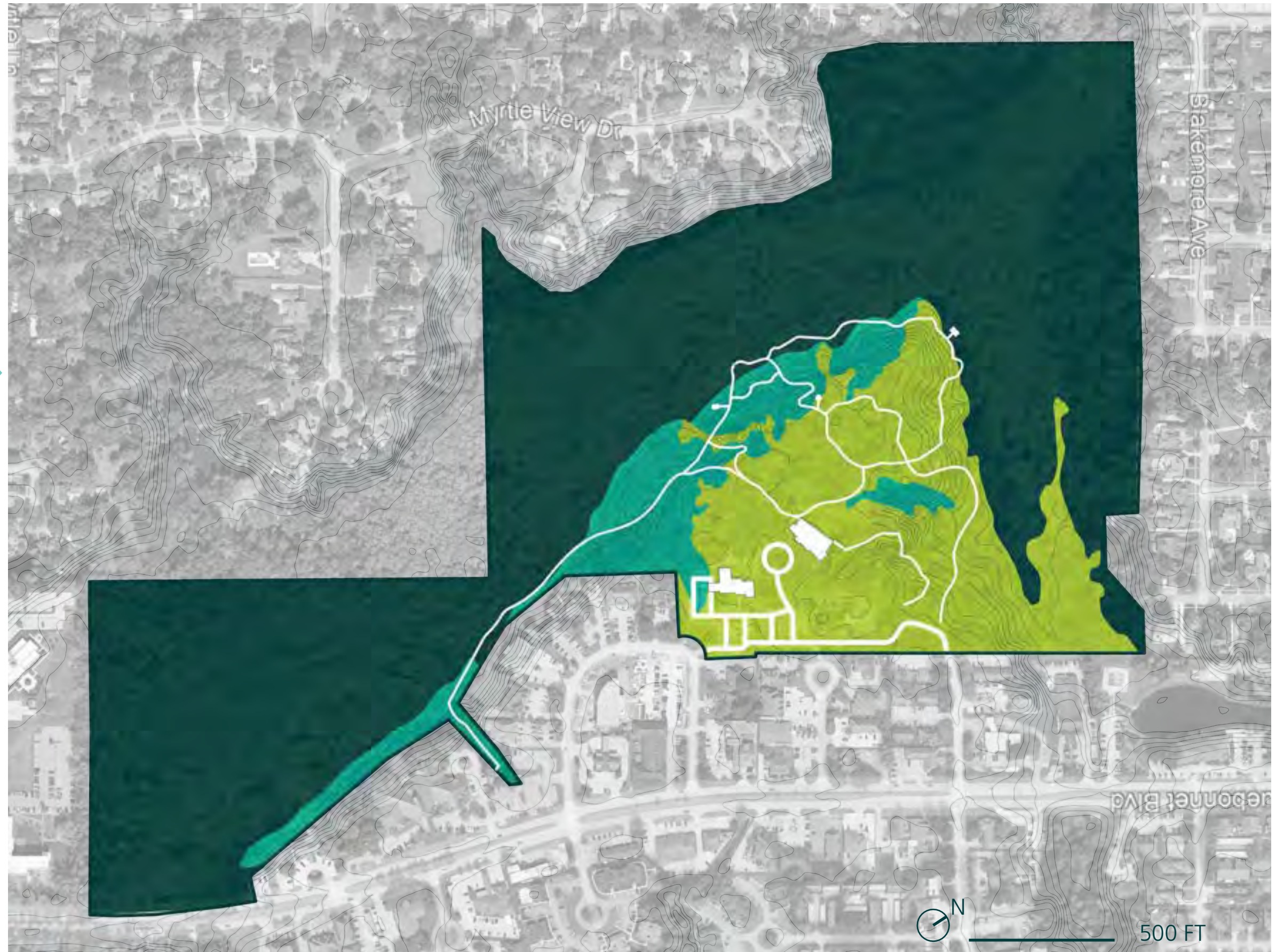


# Suitability Analysis



## Legend

- High Suitability
- Moderate Suitability
- Unsuitable





# Existing Trail System

- 1.1 total miles of trails
- Currently offers only two landscape experiences
- Currently only two types of trails available
- Swamp experience is a small portion of the existing trails.
- The layout lacks efficient visitor tracking with library serving as an entry point



Wooden Boardwalk



Crushed Stone





# Design Strategy

- Create one point of entry for visitors to the swamp.
- Set aside a significant portion of the site for nature conservation, close the entry at library.
- Get visitors further into the swamp.





# Defining Trail Experience










# Trails Expansion



- Improvement of existing trails
- Expansion of trail system with 1-¼ miles of additional trails.
- Addition of loops at varying lengths allowing different experiences in the swamp and bottomland forest areas of the site.
- An observation tower to get visitors into the canopy and closer to the many birds that visit the site.

## Legend

-  Existing Trails
-  New Trails
-  Trail Element
-  Art Installation
-  Observation Tower





# Trails Materials



## Canopy Walk

- 12-30 feet above the ground or water's surface
- 750 LF



## Fiberglass Boardwalk

- Marine grade, can be flooded
- 5,100 LF



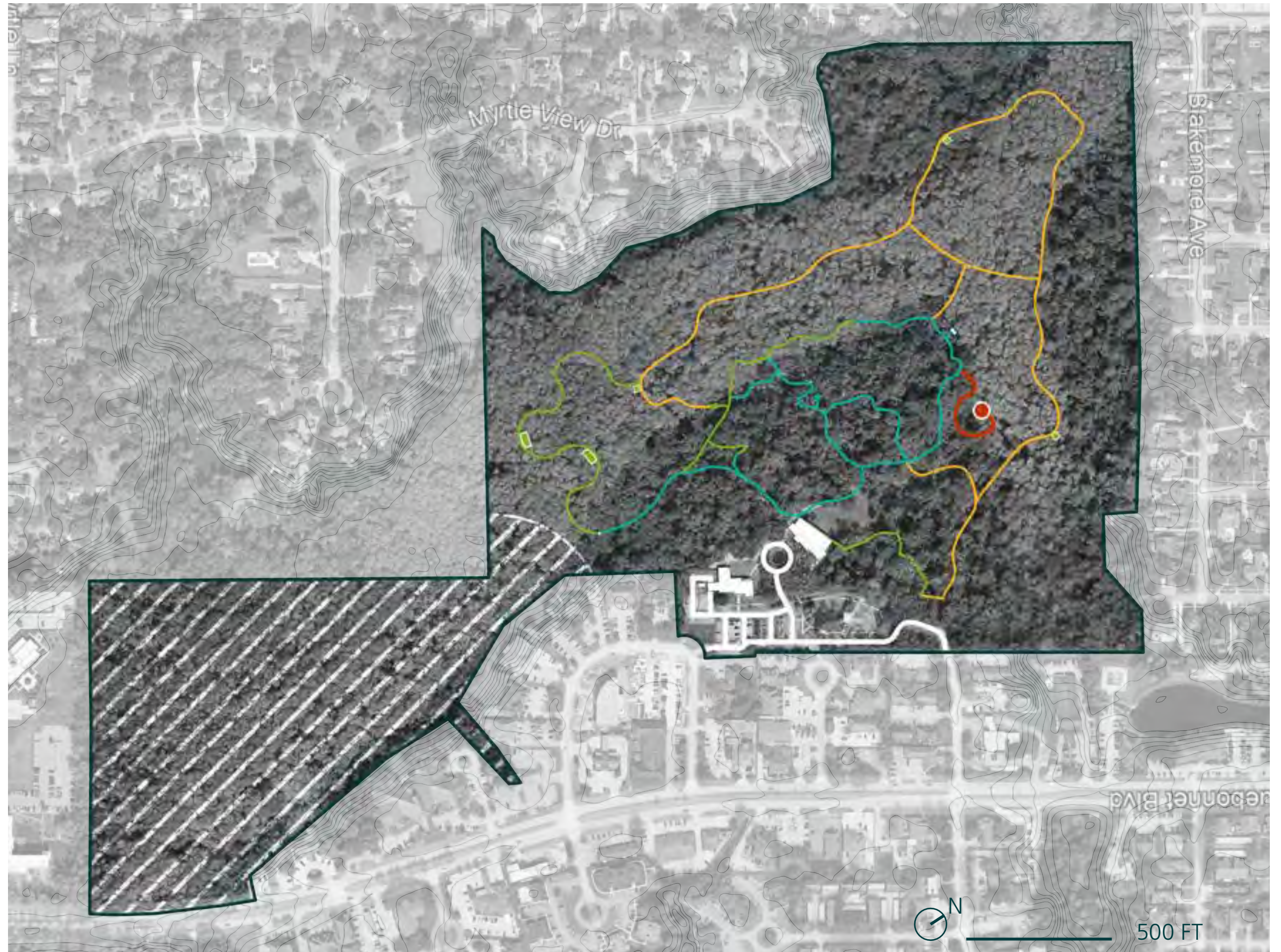
## Wooden Boardwalk

- Existing material - can be potential for fund-raising with personalized planks
- 1,500 LF



## Crushed Stone

- Defines the moments that are within the upland forest
- 3,800 LF



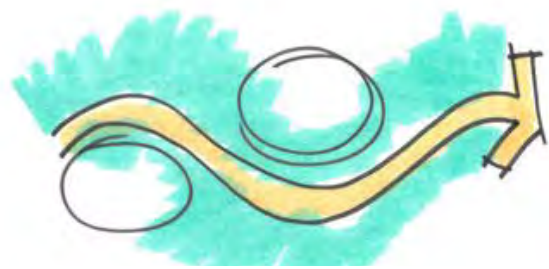


# Core Campus





# Concept One



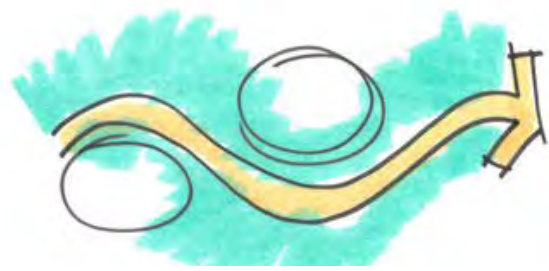
## Legend

1. Education Building
2. Welcome Center
3. Arrival Garden
4. Nature Play
5. Exploration Gardens
6. Exhibition Building
7. Outdoor Classroom
8. Upland Swamp
9. Ravine
10. Event Lawn
11. Event Center
12. Retention Pond
13. Maintenance Area





# Concept One



- Relocate the main entry
- Separate public and events with shared bioretention parking
- Activate core with nature play and exploration gardens
- Expand education with upland swamp consisting of trails, overlooks and an outdoor classroom





# Concept One - Character



Bioretention Parking



Architectural Style



Event Center



Nature Play



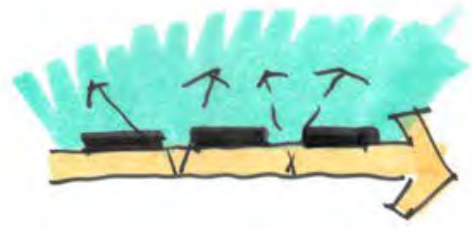
Outdoor Classroom



Exploration Garden



# Concept Two



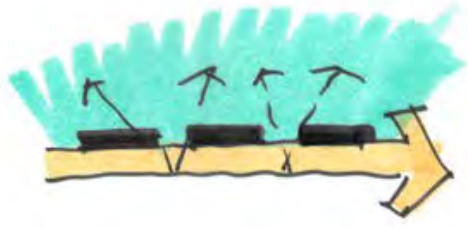
## Legend

1. Maintenance Area
2. Event Center
3. Welcome Center
4. Education Building
5. Event Lawn
6. Exploration Gardens
7. Exhibition Building
8. Nature Play
9. Expanded Meadow
10. Bird Blind
11. Outdoor Classroom
12. Ravine
13. Retention Pond





# Concept Two

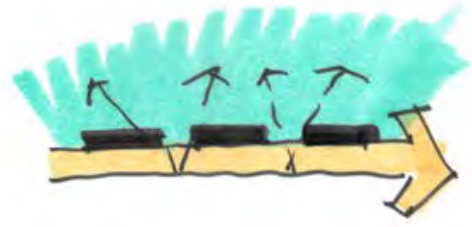


- Relocate the main entry
- Shared core campus with public visitation and private events
- Active core campus with event lawn and water gardens
- Introduce nature play immersed in the meadow





# Concept Two - Character



Bioretention Parking



Event Center



Exploration Garden



Architectural Style



Outdoor Classroom



Nature Play

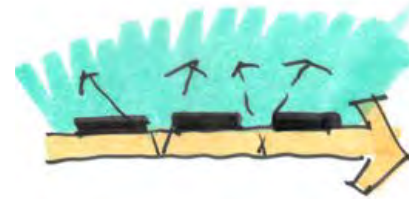


# Concept Comparison

Concept One



Concept Two





Visit the project website to share  
your thoughts:

[https://www.brec.org/page/  
BluebonnetSwampImprovements](https://www.brec.org/page/BluebonnetSwampImprovements)

SCAN ME!

