

# Hoffman Nature Area

# Masterplan

September 2014  
Tippecanoe County Park and Recreation Foundation Board

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## Acknowledgments

Green3 would like to gratefully acknowledge the following advisors to the Hoffman Nature Area planning process:

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## Vision

The J. Frederick Hoffman Memorial Nature Area is rich in natural beauty. The park's approximately 420 acres contain varied landscapes consisting of wooded floodplains, fens, dramatically sloped ravines, upland forests, and farmed agricultural fields that will undergo a phased forest restoration. The park will provide opportunities for visitors to participate in nature-centered outdoor recreation, learning, and exploration. The cultural features of the park such as the ruins of a historic homestead, a remnant of the Wabash & Erie Canal, and traces of old logging roads will provide an opportunity for visitors to learn about the changing ways that people have interacted with this unique property over time.



## Process

The Hoffman Nature Area was generously made available to the Tippecanoe County Parks Foundation with the expectation and hope that the 420 acres including the former home of the Hoffman family would be preserved as a public park. Fred and Patricia Hoffman donated a portion of the property and the remaining acreage was purchased at a bargain rate from the family of Louis and Sandy Pearlman and their son Benson. The Hoffmans and the Pearlman family envisioned the site as a nature park with the property being restored and natural areas being enhanced for public enjoyment.

The purpose of the planning process for the Hoffman Nature Area was to create a phased development plan for the park. The process began with several site visits and an analysis of site conditions. The information on opportunities and constraints resulting from the site analysis was used to identify broad goals for the park's development and programmatic objectives that supported the goals.

A variety of potential features and uses for the site such as trails, a nature center, camping areas, and active recreation activities were identified. The potential features and uses were reviewed with the Tippecanoe County Parks Board (the Board) and then presented to the public on June 27, 2012. The public meeting included an exercise designed to gather community preferences for park uses, which helped steer the design process and further refine the park plan.

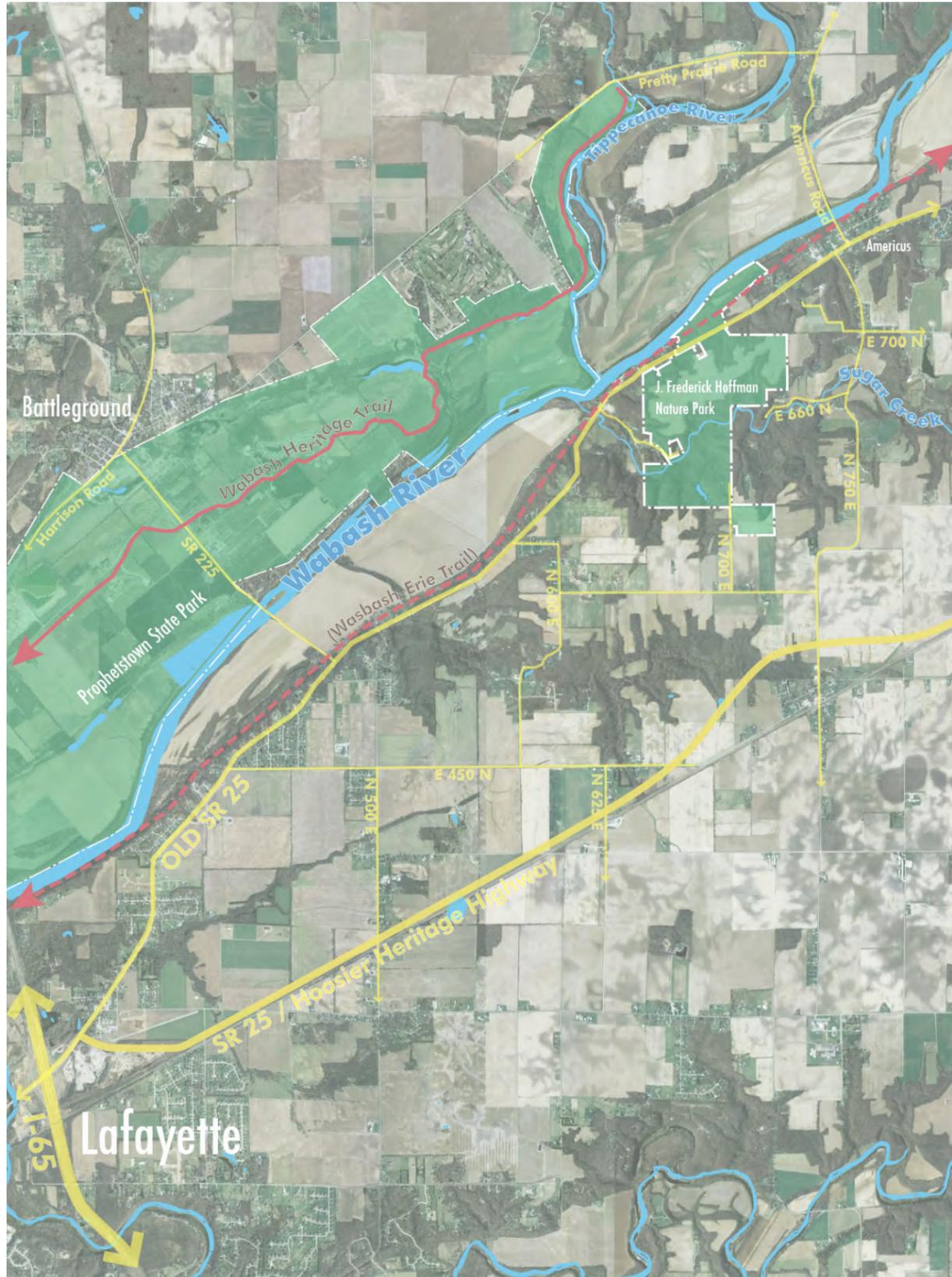
Conceptual layout plans were developed to reflect the preferences indicated by the Board and the public. Layout plans were reviewed with the Board, and based on feedback received, a draft final plan was developed. The final proposed master development plan was presented to the Board in mid-November, 2013.



### Site Analysis

The diagrams on the following pages depict the conditions that impact the park's development and provide an overview of the opportunities and constraints they present. These conditions include development restrictions based on funding sources, natural features, site history, and respect for adjacent property owners.

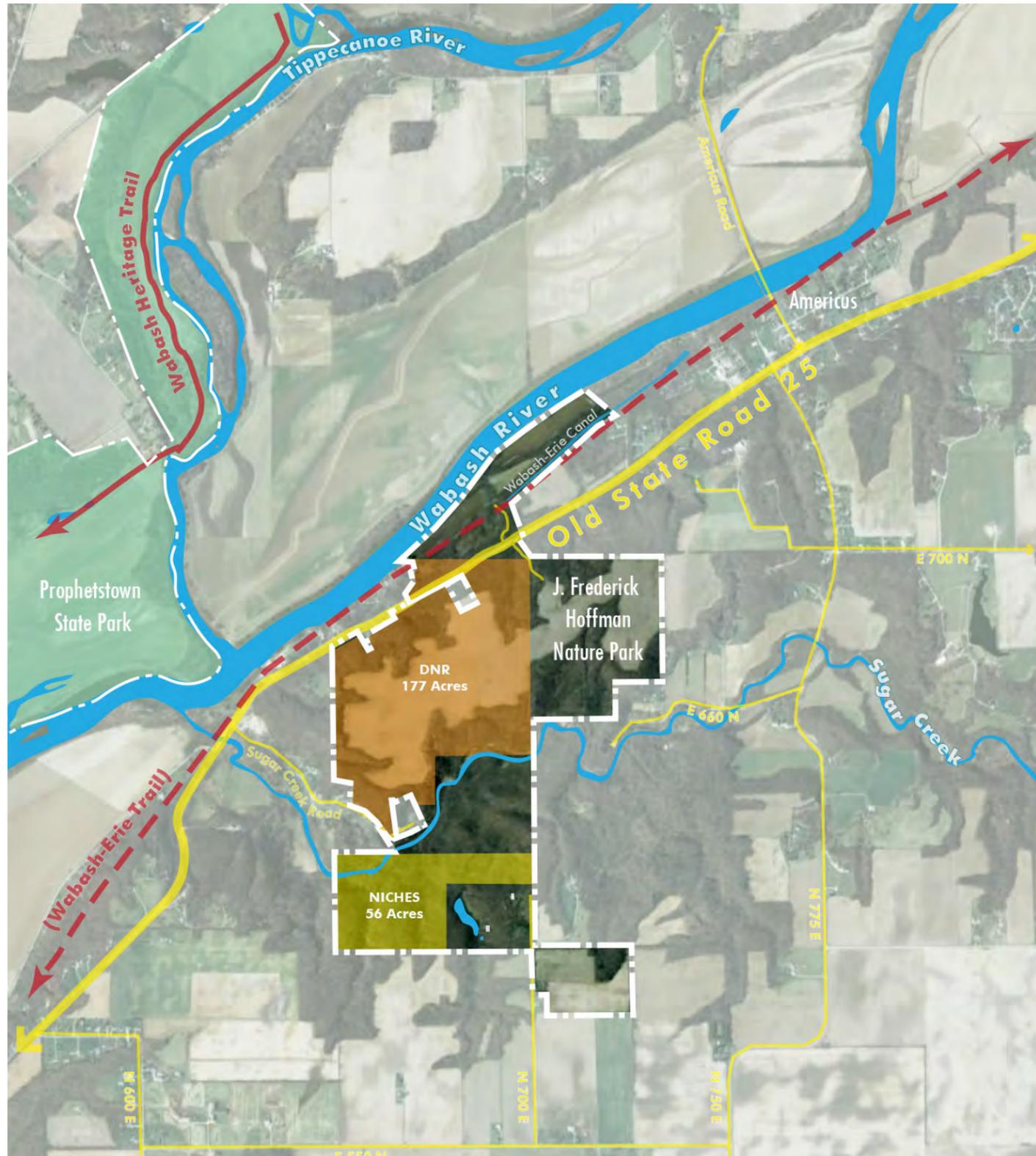
## SITE CONTEXT



The northern boundary of the Hoffman Nature Area is formed by the Wabash River and is just north of the confluence with Tippecanoe River. The park is in the Middle Wabash Little Vermilion Watershed, and the southern portion of the park is traversed by Sugar Creek. There are large forested areas, and the extensive woodlands, existing and future, could serve as much-needed breeding grounds for forest interior neotropical migrants such as the Cerulean Warbler and the Louisiana Waterthrush.

The park is near Lafayette and West Lafayette, and its proximity to I-65 and the newly constructed SR 25 Hoosier Heartland provides access to a larger population of potential visitors. Prophetstown State Park is located just down-river, and the future extension of the Wabash Heritage Trail could link Hoffman Nature Area to other recreation facilities.

Old SR 25 and Sugar Creek pass through the park, dividing it into three primary sections, and, to some degree, act as barriers. The road separates the northern riverside portion of the park from the larger southern area of the park. The central section of the park lies between Old SR 25 and Sugar Creek and contains a large area of agricultural fields. The southern section of the park is primarily wooded and includes an area that is connected by only a corner. While this area is surrounded by private property, there are also islands



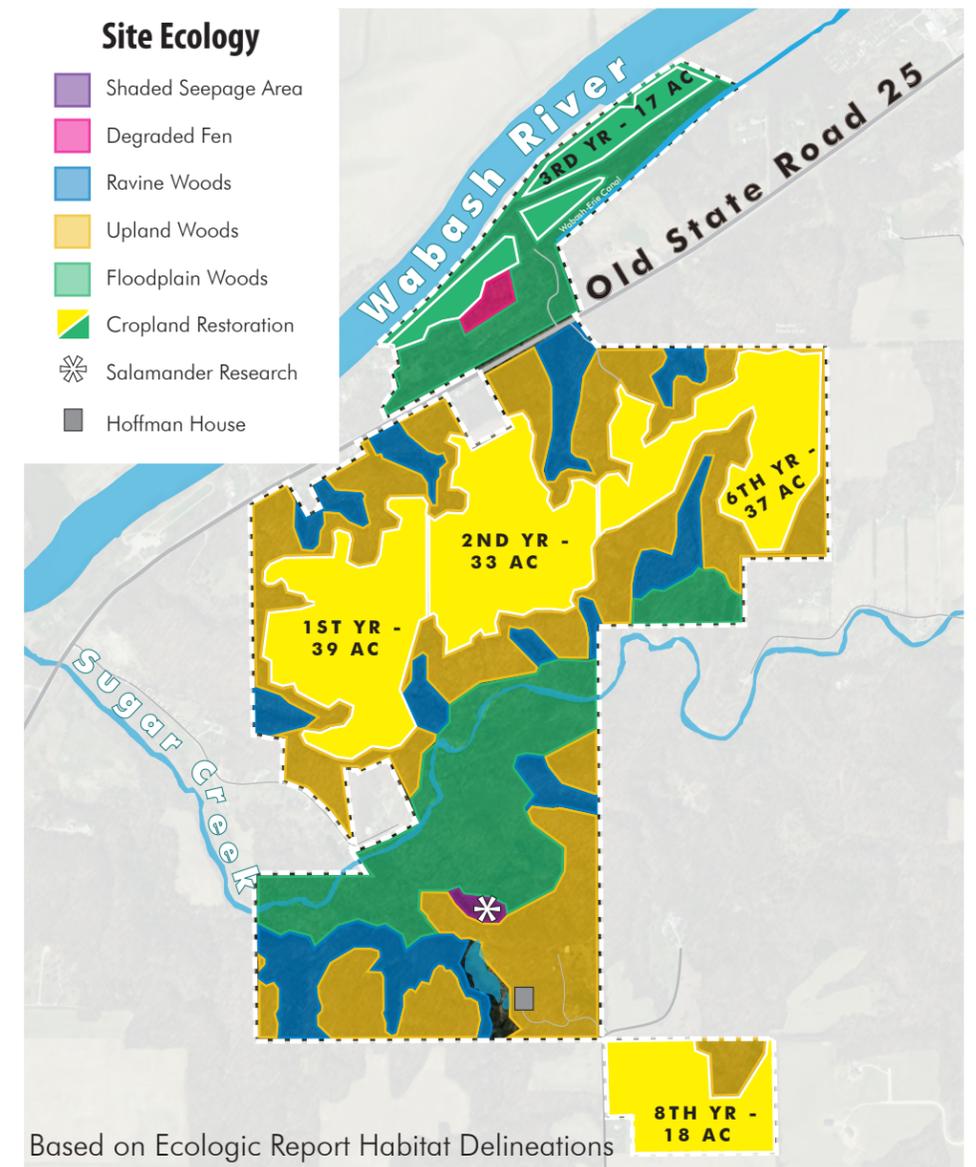
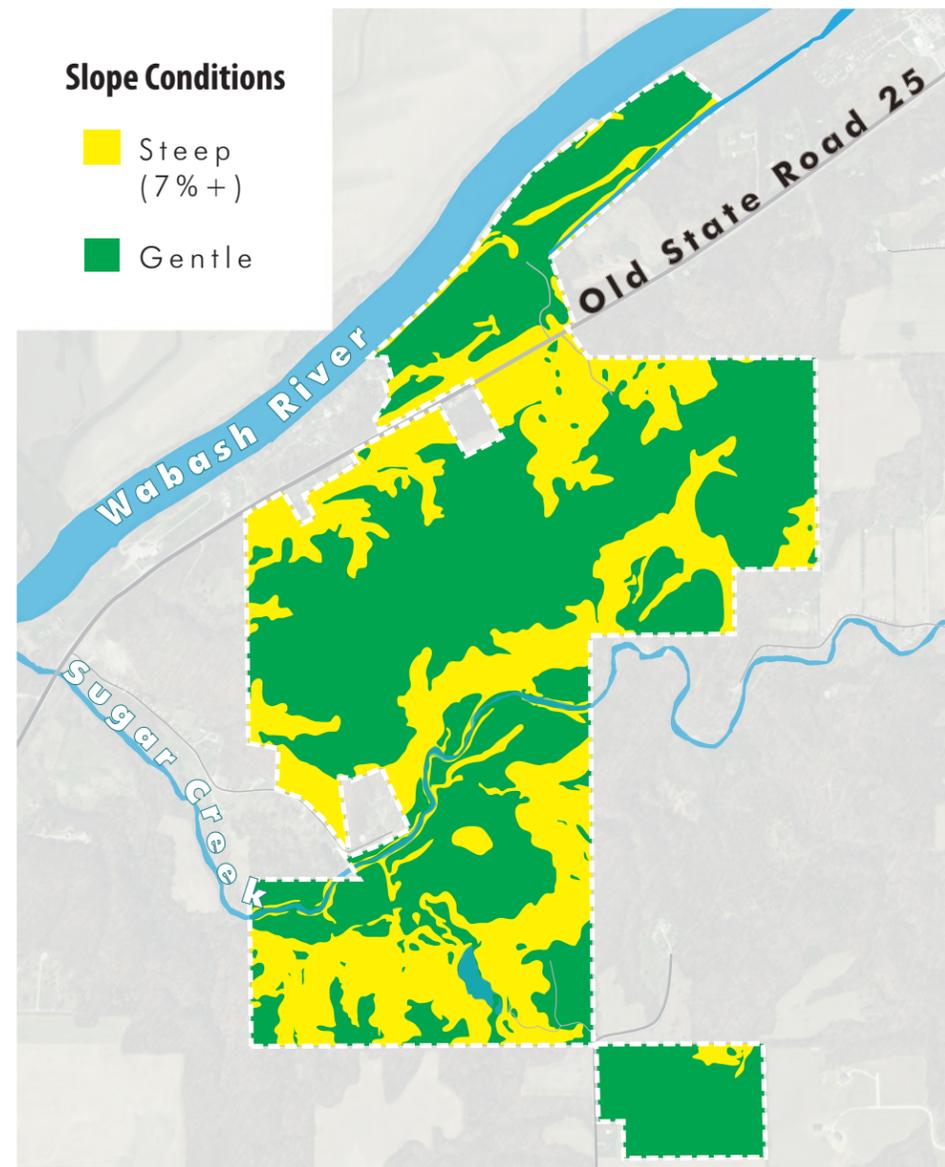
Large portions of the Hoffman Nature Area are covered by conservation easements and are legally protected from development. The Northern Indiana Citizens Helping Ecosystems Survive (NICHES) Land Trust conservation easement contains 56 acres in the southern portion of the park. The permitted activities and deed restrictions are as follows:

- May develop visitor's facilities for access, including parking lot and unpaved trails
- No structures without NICHES approval
- No grading without NICHES approval
- No roads or utilities
- No bikes, motorized vehicles, or RVs

The Indiana Department of Natural Resources Indiana Heritage Trust conservation easement covers 177 acres in the park. The permitted activities and deed restrictions are as follows:

- Visitor's facilities allowed, including shelters, parking lots, and trails. Requires IDNR plan approval.
- Non-developed/dispersed recreation such as biking/hiking allowed
- No improvements without IDNR approval
- No grading without IDNR approval
- No roads or utilities
- No motorized vehicles or RVs

# NATURAL FEATURES



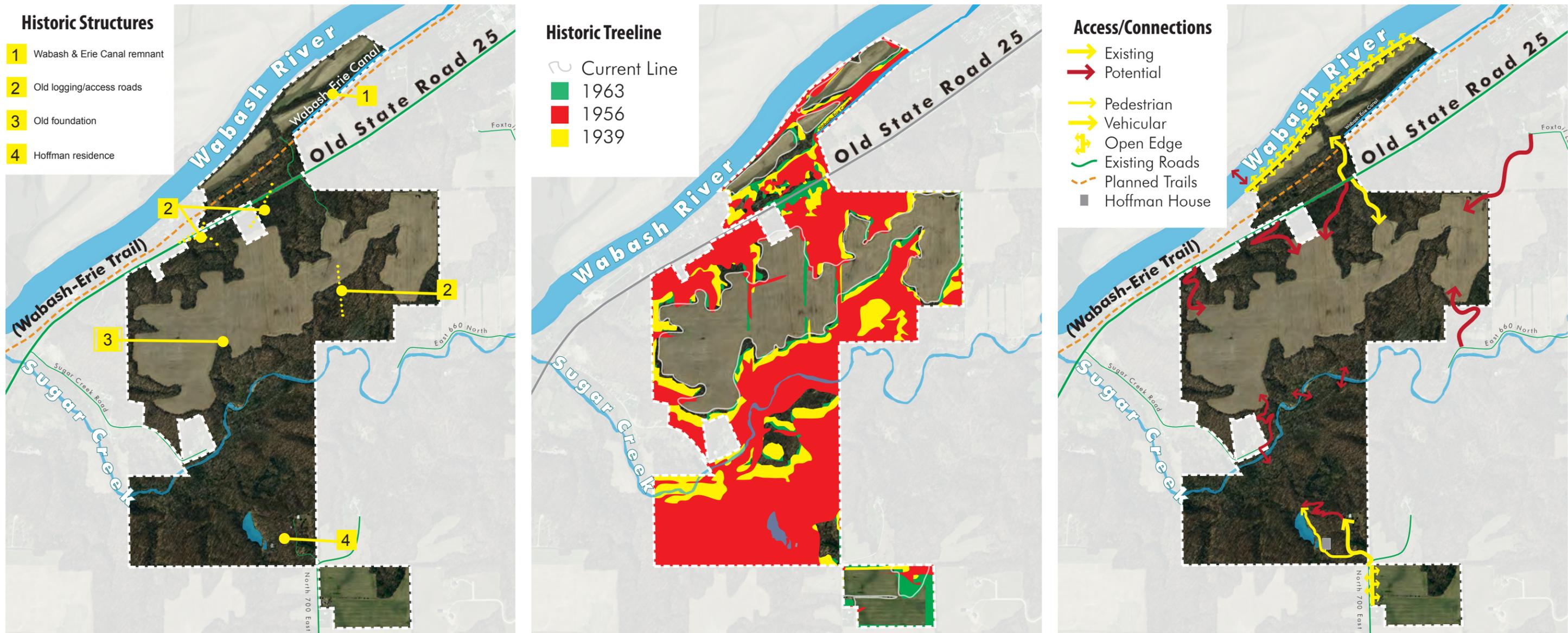
The main hydrologic features of the park are the Wabash River and Sugar Creek. Most of the area of the park to the north of Old SR 25 falls within the floodplain of the Wabash River. A significant portion of the park's southern area is within the Sugar Creek floodplain (see Site Ecology map). Surface water flows from the slightly sloped upland areas, down steep drainages, through the gently sloped floodplains toward the river and creek.

The varied topographic regions of the park are associated with a rich variety of flora and fauna. The park is home to or is adjacent to habitats for two endangered species (Cerulean Warblers and Four-Toed Salamanders), a species of concern (Tippecanoe Darter), and a state significant habitat (Fen).

In the areas of the park that were too steep to be cleared for farming, woods exist on the moderately sloped uplands and in the steep ravines. The characteristic trees of the upland woods include various oak and hickory species, Black Walnut, and Tulip Trees. Northern Red Oaks, American Beech, Sugar Maples, Basswood, and Tulip Trees can be found on the steep slopes of the riparian woods.

The characteristic plants of the floodplain woods are American Sycamores, Silver Maples, Boxelder, and Spicebush. Within the Wabash floodplain there is a degraded fen, 17 acres of agricultural fields, and a water-filled remnant of the Wabash Erie Canal. In the Sugar Creek floodplain there is a shaded seepage area that is home to a community of Four-Toed Salamanders.

# HISTORIC ELEMENTS / BUILT ENVIRONMENT



The first map above shows the location of historic structures in the Hoffman Nature Area. In addition to agricultural fields, there are other visible elements of the interactions of people with the land. In the northern portion of the site, midway between the Wabash River and Old State Road 25, lies a water-filled remnant of the Wabash & Erie Canal. Traces of several historic logging roads are clearly visible on the site. A stone foundation at the forest edge is all that remains of a historic homestead. The Hoffman residence and several out-buildings are located in the southern portion of the site.

The map of historic treelines shows how the forest edge has shifted over time. Approximately 144 acres of land is cleared and currently maintained as agricultural fields. Historically, there were more cleared areas. The most visible change to the south of Sugar Creek is an area which was not forested as recently as 1963.

Some of the treeline shift in the upland fields can be attributed to the effects of erosion at the tops of ravines, which limits farming activities.

The third map shows the existing and potential access points into and within the site. Along the northern edge, the Wabash River provides numerous access points. Gravel drives provide vehicular access off of Old SR 25 into the northern and southern portions of the site. Vehicular access is also possible from the south via County Road 700 S. Additional or new access points could be developed at the indicated locations. Currently, Sugar Creek acts as a barrier to moving from the northern to the southern portion of the site. Possible locations for pedestrian bridges crossing the creek are identified.



PLAN GOALS

The Tippecanoe County Park and Recreation Foundation identified three overarching goals regarding the development of the Hoffman Nature Area (HNA). These goals provided the framework depicted at right for determining focused objectives and the elements associated with each objective. The goals are to do the following:

- 1) Restore / Preserve / Enhance Nature
- 2) Create an Identity for Hoffman
- 3) Develop Opportunities to Experience the Unique Features of the Site

Restore / Preserve / Enhance Nature

The development of the HNA will support site restoration by integrating succession strategies and the forest restoration plans prepared by EcoLogic. Wildlife habitat value will be maximized by limiting site access and development and by creating habitat connections and corridors across clearings. The diverse microhabitats present in the HNA support a diversity of wildlife. This biodiversity will be preserved by avoiding the disruption of the site’s hydrology and topography.

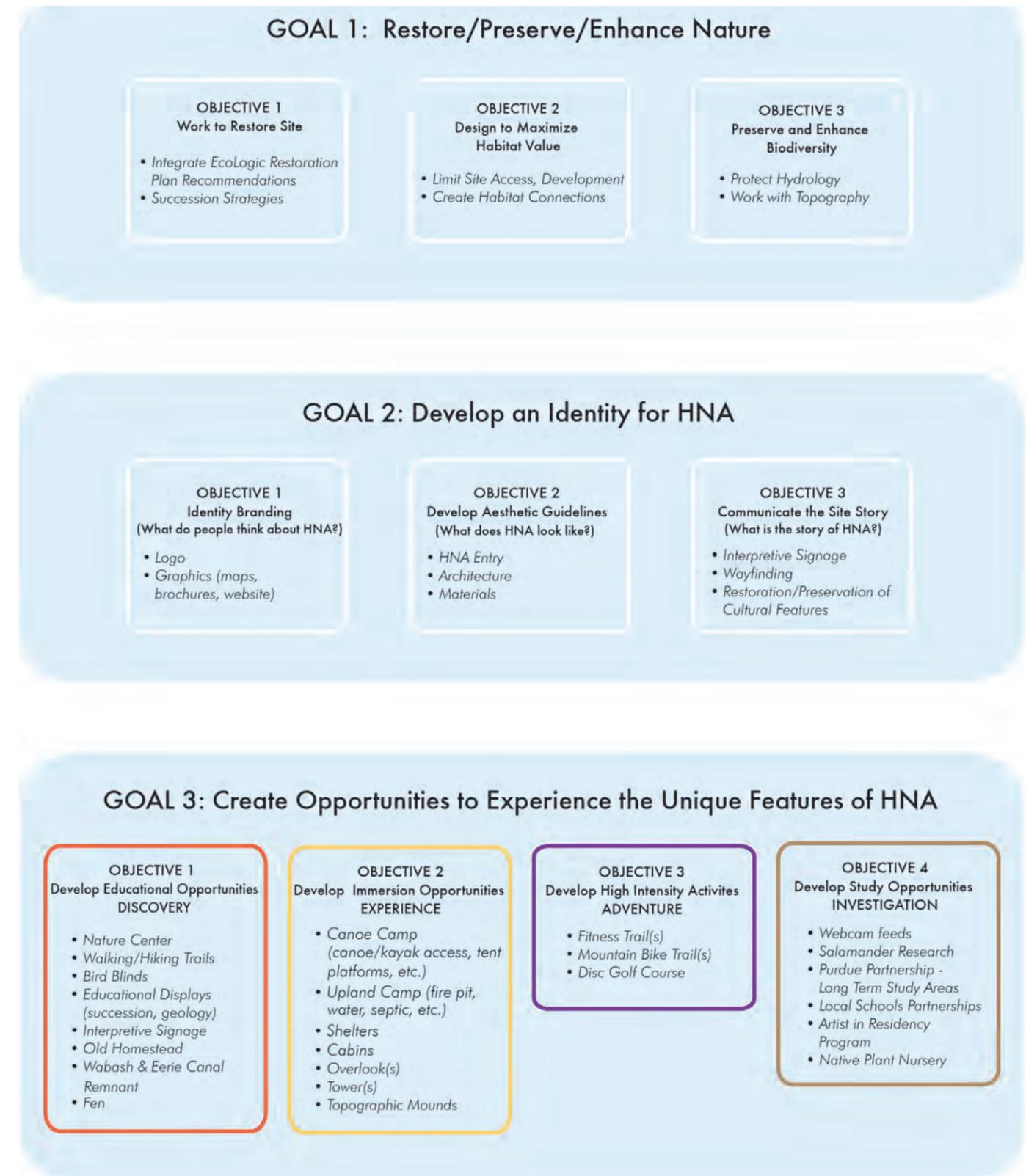
Create an Identity for Hoffman

The identity for the HNA should be formed by a sense of place that emerges from the site’s story and from an integrated and authentic aesthetic of built and graphic elements. Similar materials and forms should be present throughout the park in items such as shelters, site furnishings, and wayfinding signage. Interpretive signage should be incorporated throughout the park to connect visitors with the unique historic, cultural, and environmental aspects of the HNA.

Develop Opportunities to Experience the Unique Features of the Site

Within the boundaries of the HNA one can experience the Wabash River, marshes, rugged ravines, expansive clearings, thickets, open forest, sparkling Sugar Creek, and more. The different kinds of places, habitats, and ecologies of the HNA lend themselves towards different ways that people can and should interact with them. The consideration of recreation and educational opportunities led to the development of the following four programmatic objectives:

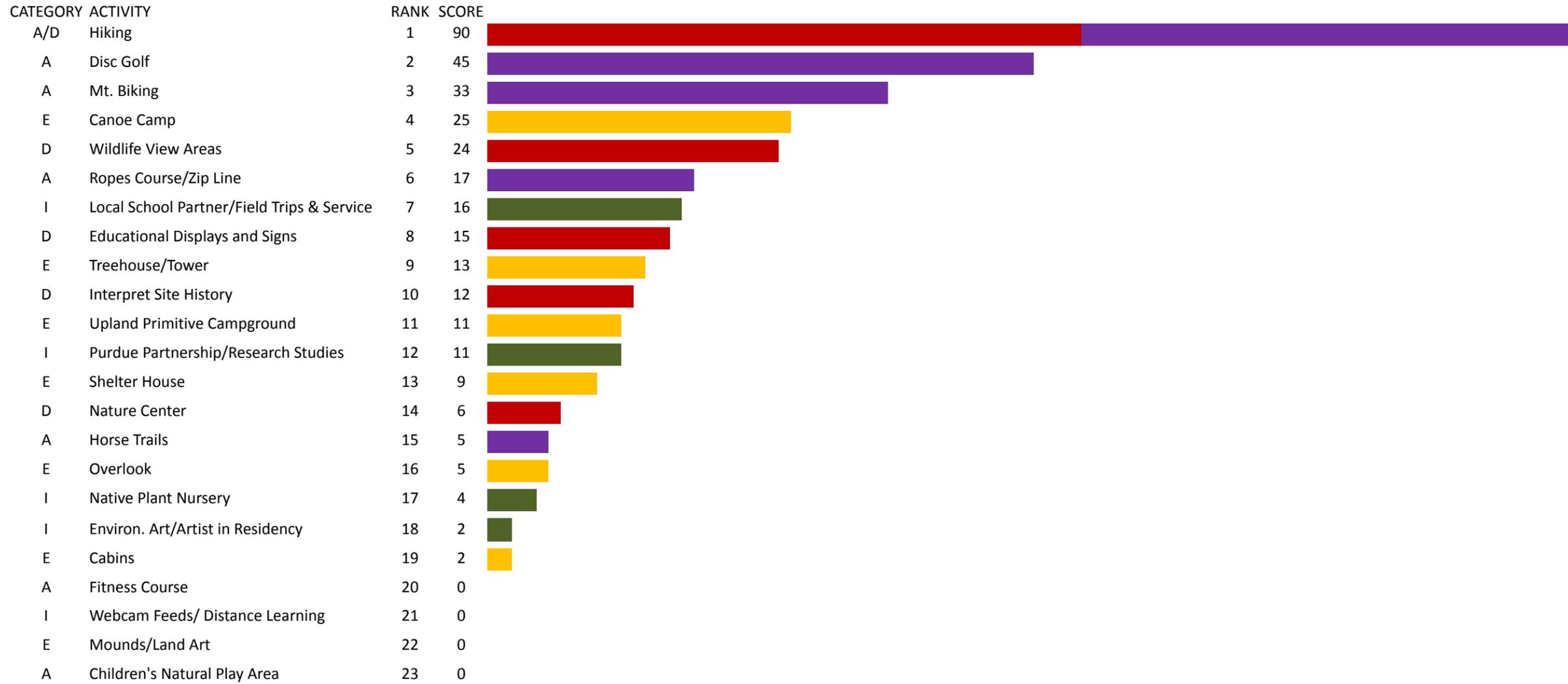
- 1) Develop DISCOVERY opportunities
- 2) Develop EXPERIENCE opportunities
- 3) Develop ADVENTURE opportunities
- 4) Develop INVESTIGATION opportunities

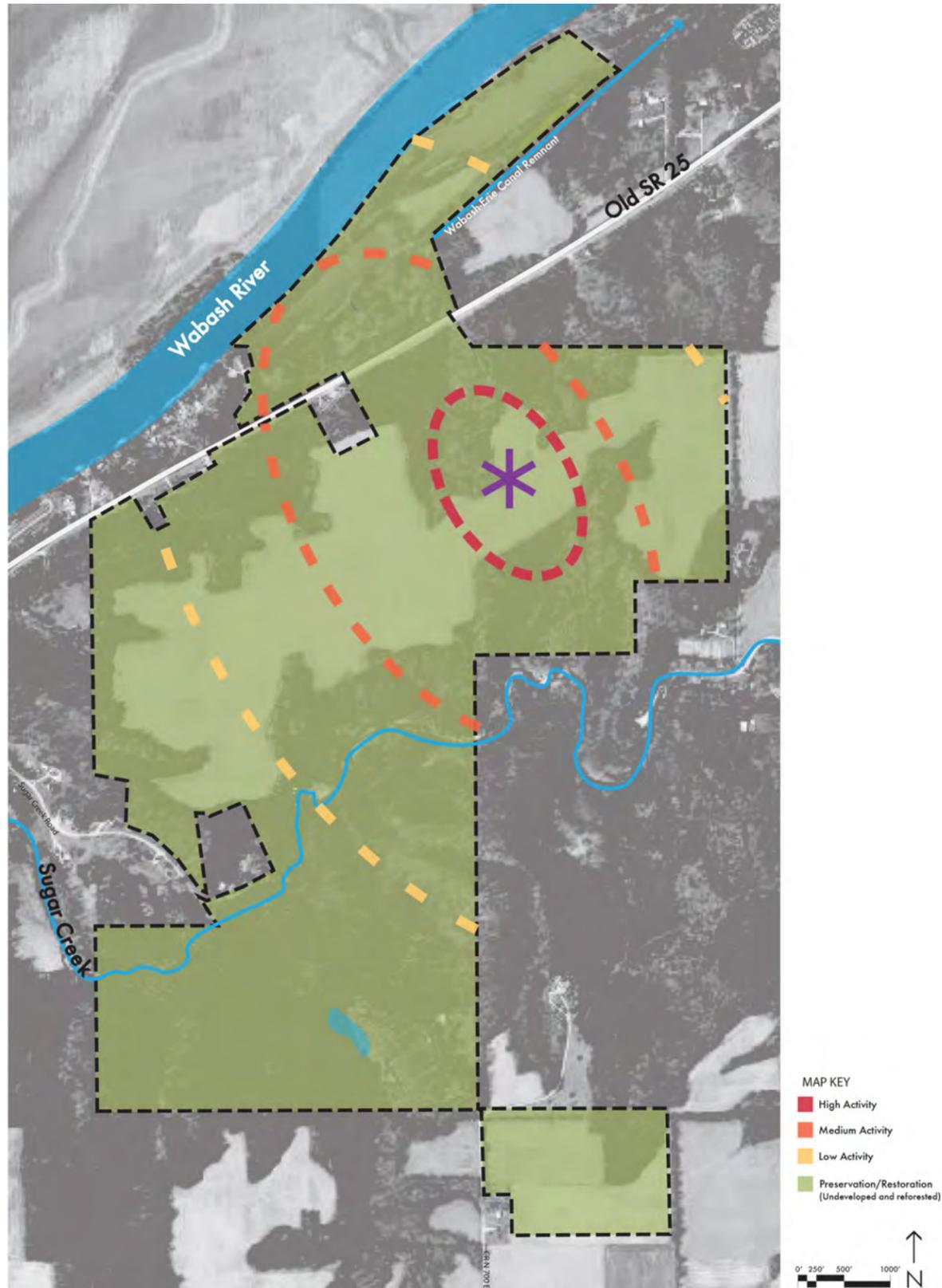


PUBLIC & STAKEHOLDER INPUT

The plan approach and goals were shared with the public at an open house in June 2012, and adjacent property owners were invited to attend. There were 33 attendees who provided input. While concerns were expressed that public access would be detrimental to the natural state of the area, on average, the group supported the development of the site into a public park and felt that this would meet a need in the community. Adjacent landowners generally desired to keep development and activities away from the park boundaries.

In order to get a sense of what types of activities were preferred by the group, attendees voted by placing dots on large boards depicting activities and features that corresponded to the four categories of opportunities to experience the Hoffman Nature Area (Discovery, Experience, Adventure, and Investigation). As shown in the bar graph below, the most desired activities of this group were hiking, disc golf, and mountain biking. There was also a strong desire for a canoe camp and wildlife viewing areas.

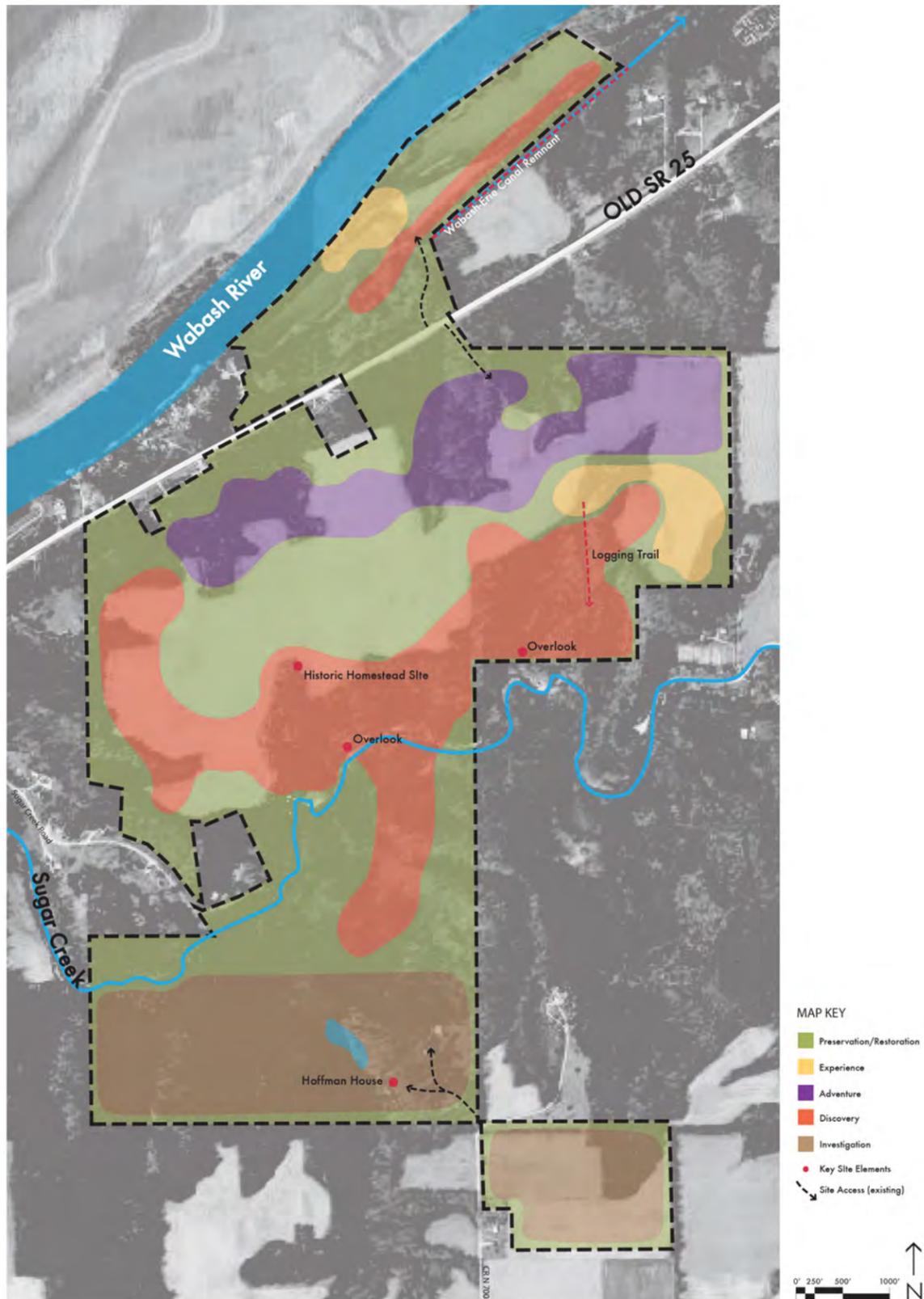




### INTENSITY OF USE

Site analysis and the consideration of the objectives of Goal 1: Restore / Preserve / Enhance Nature guided the concept of use-intensity zones that are characterized by either high-, medium-, or low-activity levels. The high activity zone was identified as an area in the north central section of the park. This area was chosen because it was not in a conservation easement, already possessed a means of access, and was less environmentally sensitive than other areas. The degree of sensitivity was determined by such things as the recorded presence of endangered species or sensitive habitat.

# SITE ORGANIZATION



The desired intensity of use and a consideration of the site’s opportunities and constraints informed the identification of natural restoration or preservations areas and the placement of four activity zones as shown in the map at left. These zones corresponded to the four general programmatic categories – Discovery, Experience, Adventure, and Investigation – that were identified to meet the goal of experiencing the unique features of the Hoffman Nature Area (HNA).

In the northern portion of the site, an experience zone (yellow) along the shore of the Wabash River was identified as the future location of a Canoe Camp. The nearby discovery zone (orange) is adjacent to the remnant of the Erie and Wabash Canal.

In the central portion of the park, high-intensity activities are confined to the adventure zone (purple) accessible from Old State Road 25. The discovery zone links the eastern portions of the adventure zone to the experience zone, which contains the historic homestead site, overlooks with scenic views of Sugar Creek, and a historic logging road that could make an ideal segment of a hiking trail.

South of Sugar Creek, the southern portion of HNA contains a lobe of the experience zone and the investigation zone (brown) which contains the contemporary home site and encompasses the southeastern park parcel.



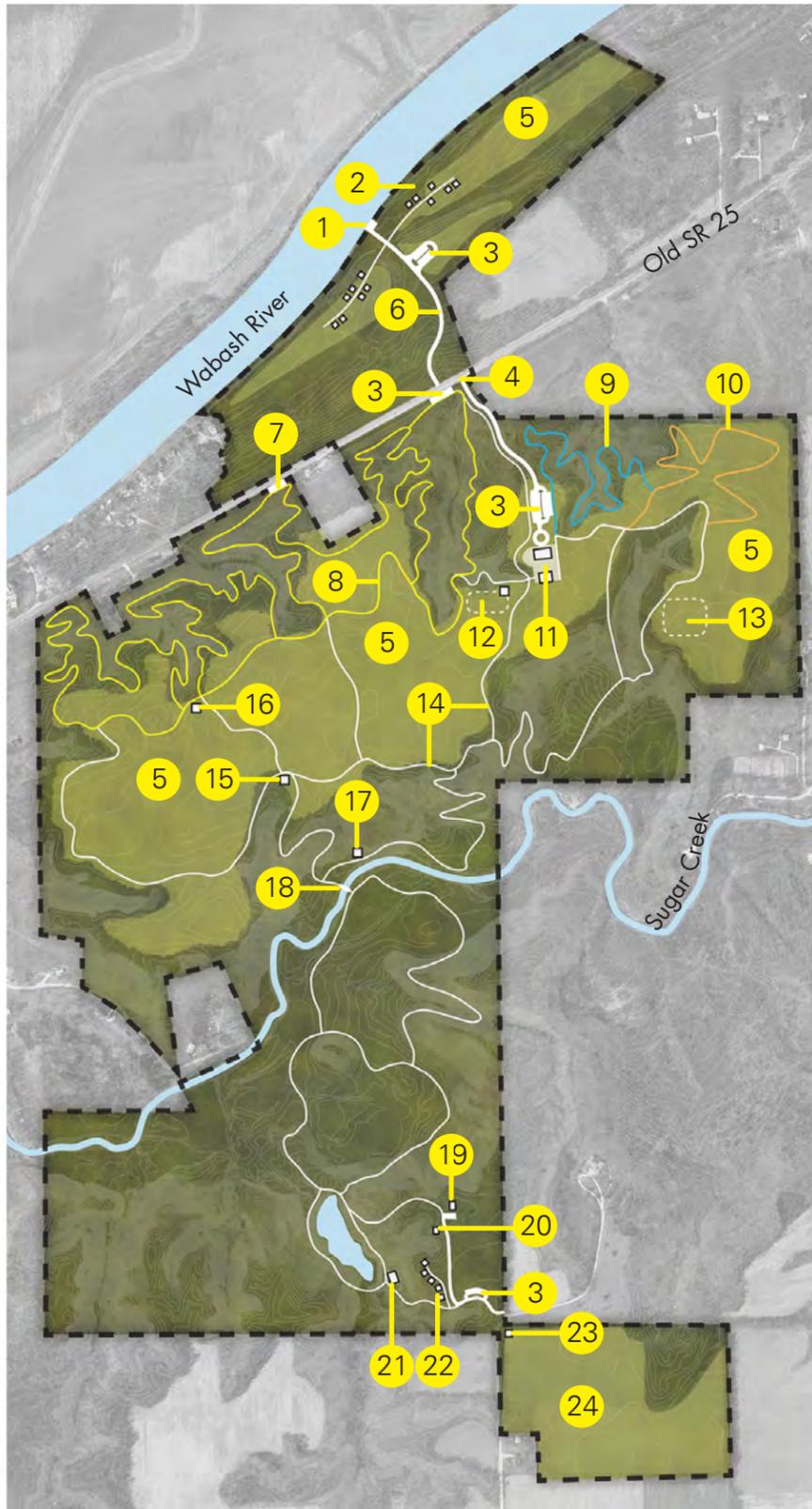
**MAP KEY**

- Trail
- Road / Pavement
- Built Structure
- Restored Forest
- Preserved Forest



The Hoffman Nature Area plan shows three main development nodes. These are the canoe camp along the Wabash River (A), the Nature Center hub in the central portion of the park between Old State Road 25 and Sugar Creek (B), and a retreat center in the southern section of the park (C). In other areas of the park there are a few scattered structures and an extensive network of trails that is most concentrated in the central section of the park. The current access points into the park are maintained and there is the addition of parking at the three main nodes. The agricultural fields in the northern and central sections of the park are revegetated, and the field in the southernmost section will be used as a native plant nursery.

# SITE FEATURES



- 1 Boat Launch
- 2 Canoe Camp
- 3 Parking Lot
- 4 Main Park Entrance
- 5 Restored Woodland
- 6 Access Road
- 7 Auxiliary Parking
- 8 Mountain Bike Trails
- 9 Fitness Station Loop
- 10 Disc Golf Course
- 11 Nature Center, Shelter, Plaza
- 12 Low Ropes Course & Tower
- 13 Primitive Camping Area
- 14 Hiking Trail
- 15 Wildlife Viewing Area
- 16 Tree House
- 17 Overlook
- 18 Pedestrian Bridge
- 19 Barn / Maintenance Building
- 20 Park Caretaker Cottage
- 21 Meeting House
- 22 Cabins
- 23 Nursery Gateway
- 24 Native Plant Nursery

The location of proposed park features is indicated at left. Areas of the park currently being farmed will be restored to woodlands. Facilities for active recreation, such as mountain biking and disc golf, are concentrated in the central section of the park. A fitness loop and primitive camping site are also located in this section of the park, keeping them within a short distance from the main parking lot and the Nature Center. A retreat center will be located in the southern section of the park, accessible from the north via a pedestrian bridge over Sugar Creek and currently accessible from the south via a county road.

The conceptual graphics on the following pages depict some of the key features proposed for the development of the park. The overarching aesthetic of the park is based on the use of wood and stone in a simple and contemporary way as part of all built structures.



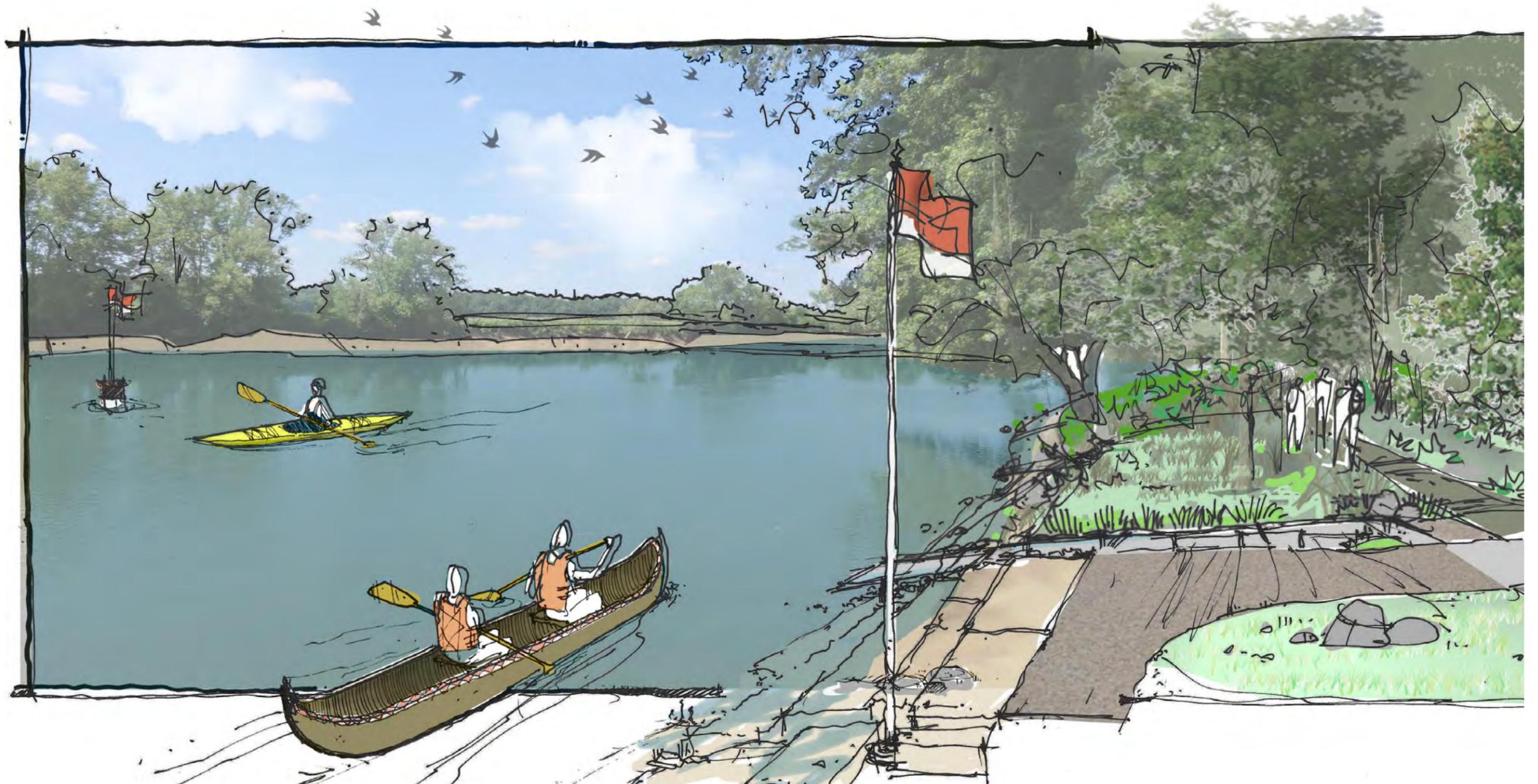
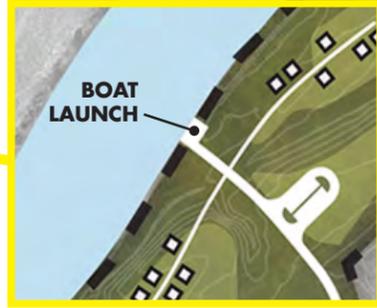
# MAIN PARK ENTRANCE



A RIVER TRAIL | ENTRY MONUMENT TOWER | OLD SR 25 | ENTRY MONUMENT TOWER | PARK TRAIL A

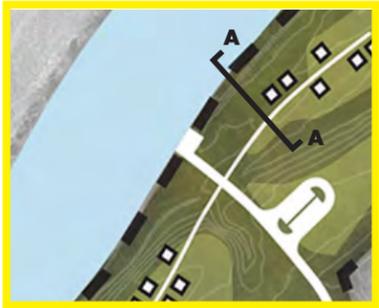
The main entrance to the Hoffman Nature Area is marked by two monumental stone gateway features. The larger tower is located adjacent to the access road leading up to the portion of the park south of Old State Road 25. The smaller tower is adjacent to the access road leading north toward the Wabash River. The location of the section line (A) is shown in the plan inset above.

## BOAT LAUNCH



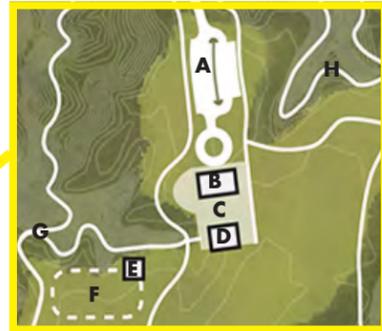
A boat launch (A) on the shore of the Wabash River will allow park visitors to hand carry their canoes and kayaks to the river for a waterway excursion or to arrive at the park via the river instead of the road.

# CANOE CAMP



A canoe camp with wooden platforms for tents is located a short distance from the boat launch. The clustering of platforms allows the camp to easily accommodate multiple groups of campers. The location of the section line (A) is shown in the plan inset above.

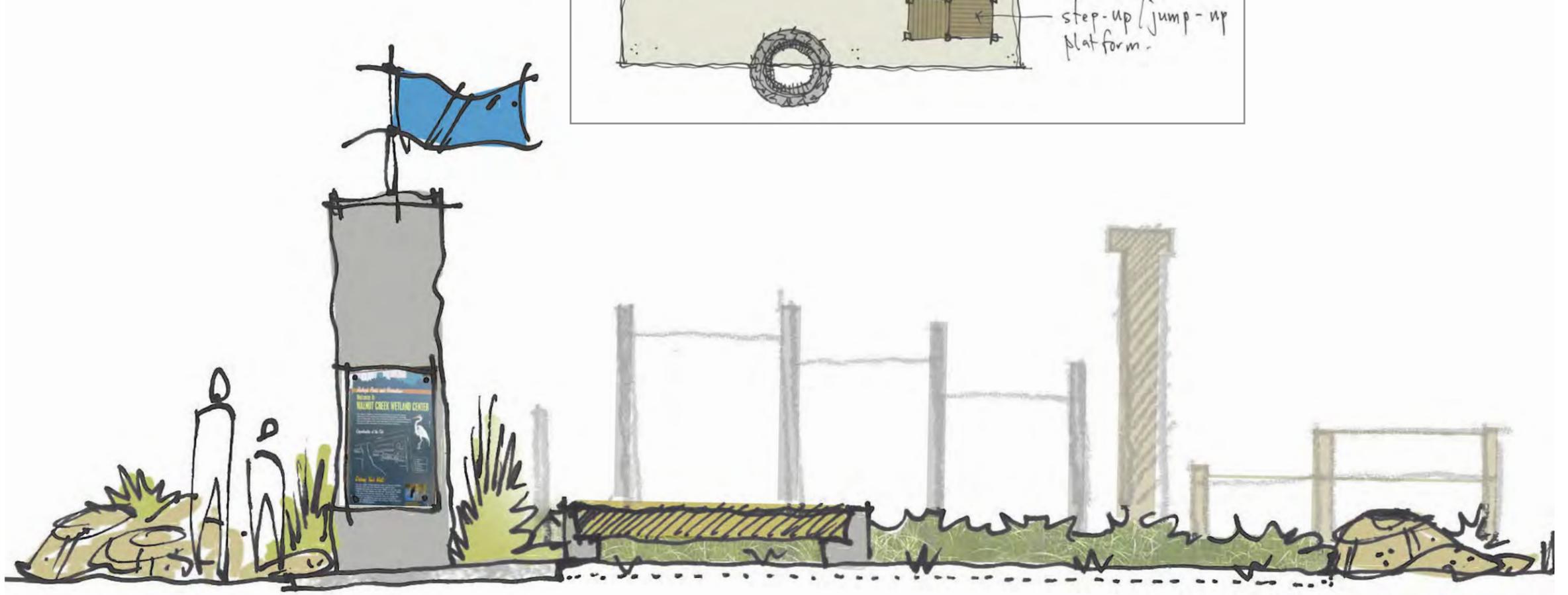
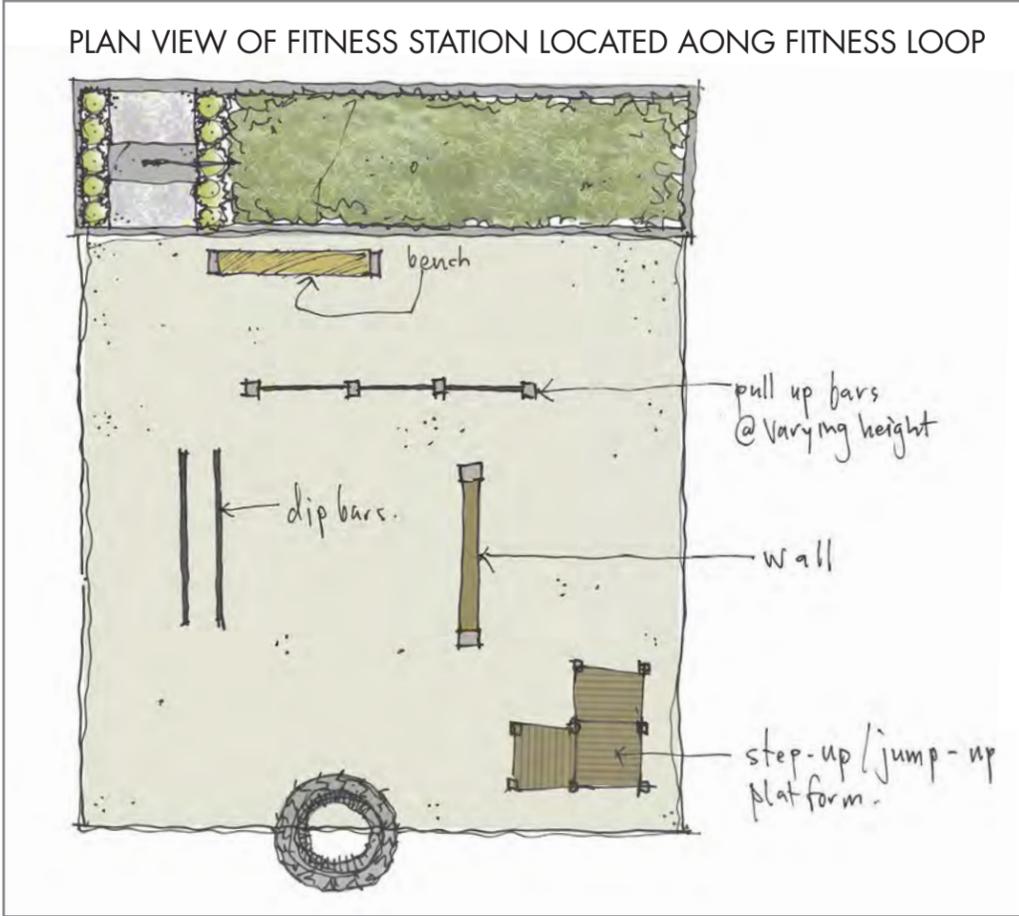
# NATURE CENTER / SHELTER / PLAZA



Visitors to the Hoffman Nature Area enter via the entry drive to arrive at the park hub. Here they can leave their cars in the parking lot (A), see an interactive exhibit in the Nature Center (B), and meet up with friends in the plaza (C) or the park shelter (D). Then they may head off to the lookout tower (E), low ropes course (F), trails for hiking or mountain biking (G), the fitness loop (H), disc golf course, and camping sites.



**FITNESS STATION**



The fitness loop is located a short walk from the Nature Center. Visitors of any fitness level can travel from one fitness station to another and get a total body workout. Kiosks at each station will provide directions and suggestions for using the fitness equipment safely and effectively.

TRAIL ACCESS

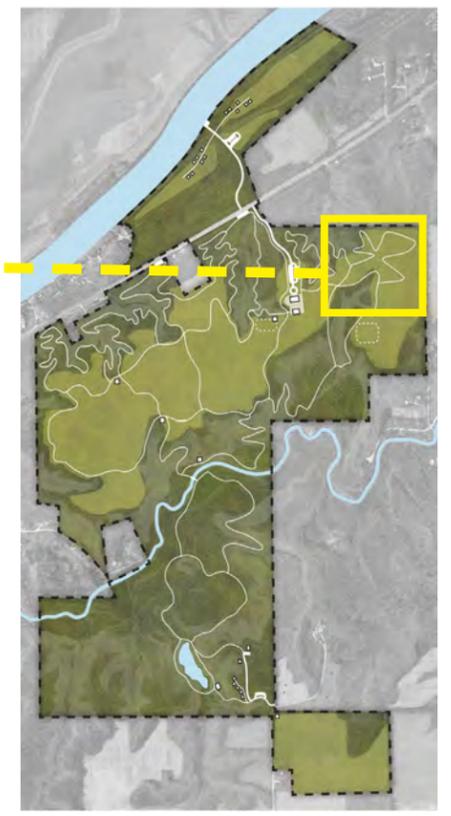
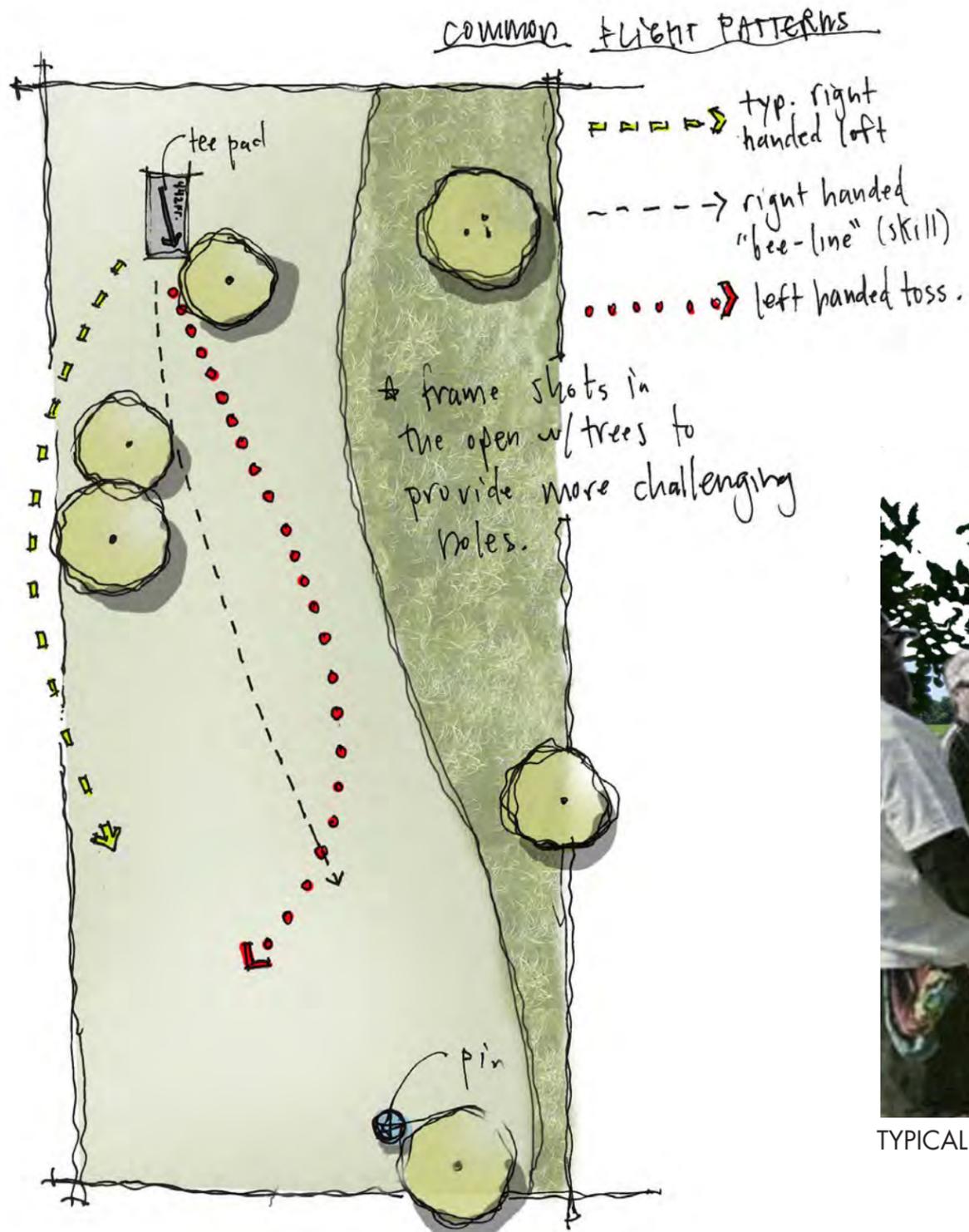
KIOSK WITH FITNESS STATION INFO

FITNESS STATION EQUIPMENT (VARIES)

# CAMPING



Primitive campsites accessible by trail will provide park visitors with the opportunity to experience the Hoffman Nature Area more extensively and intensively.

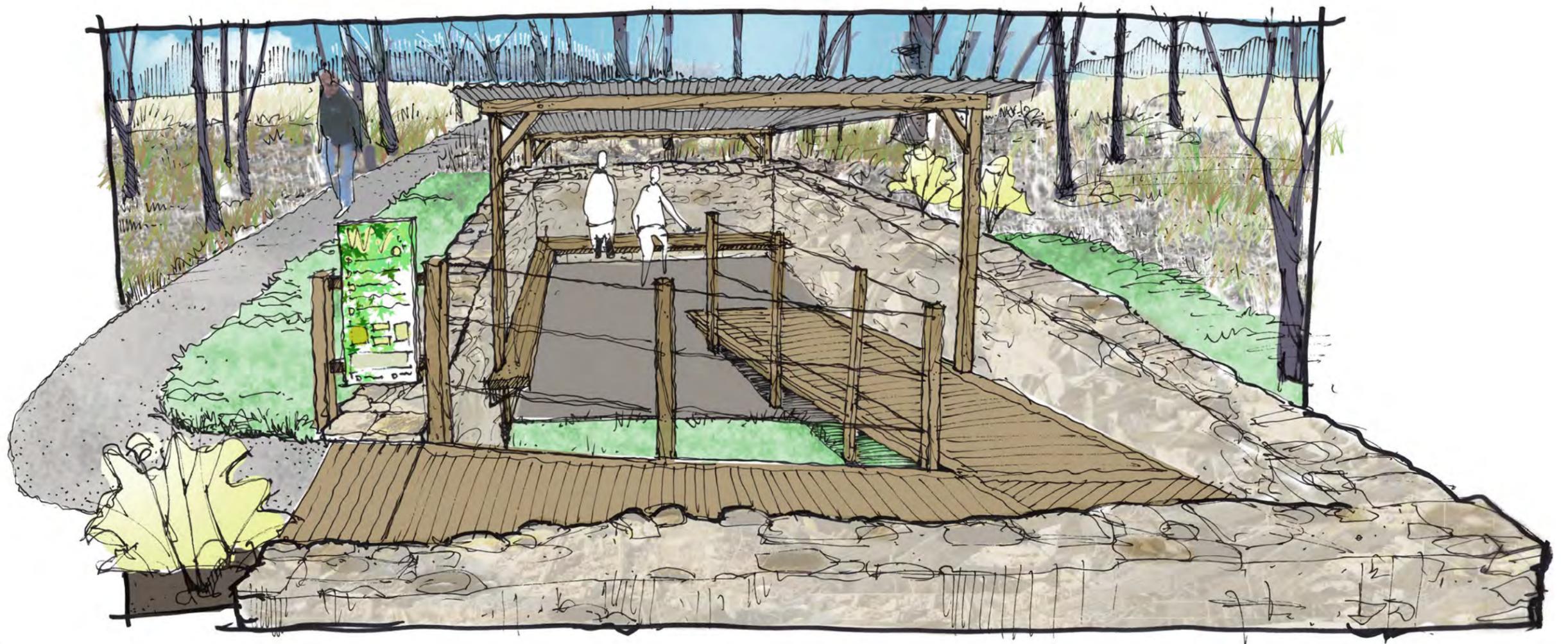


TYPICAL DISC GOLF TEE BOX

TYPICAL DISC GOLF HOLE LAYOUT

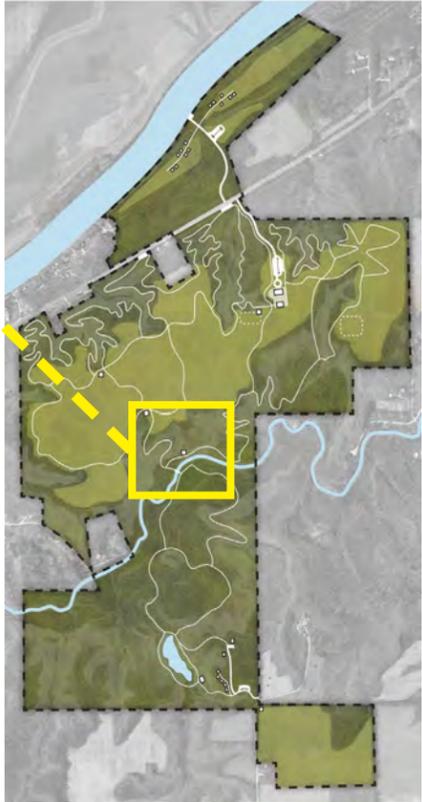
The Hoffman Nature Area disc golf course will take players through open areas and woods as they move through the 18-hole course. The placement of tee pads and baskets will be designed to accommodate players of different skill levels.

## WILDLIFE VIEWING AREA



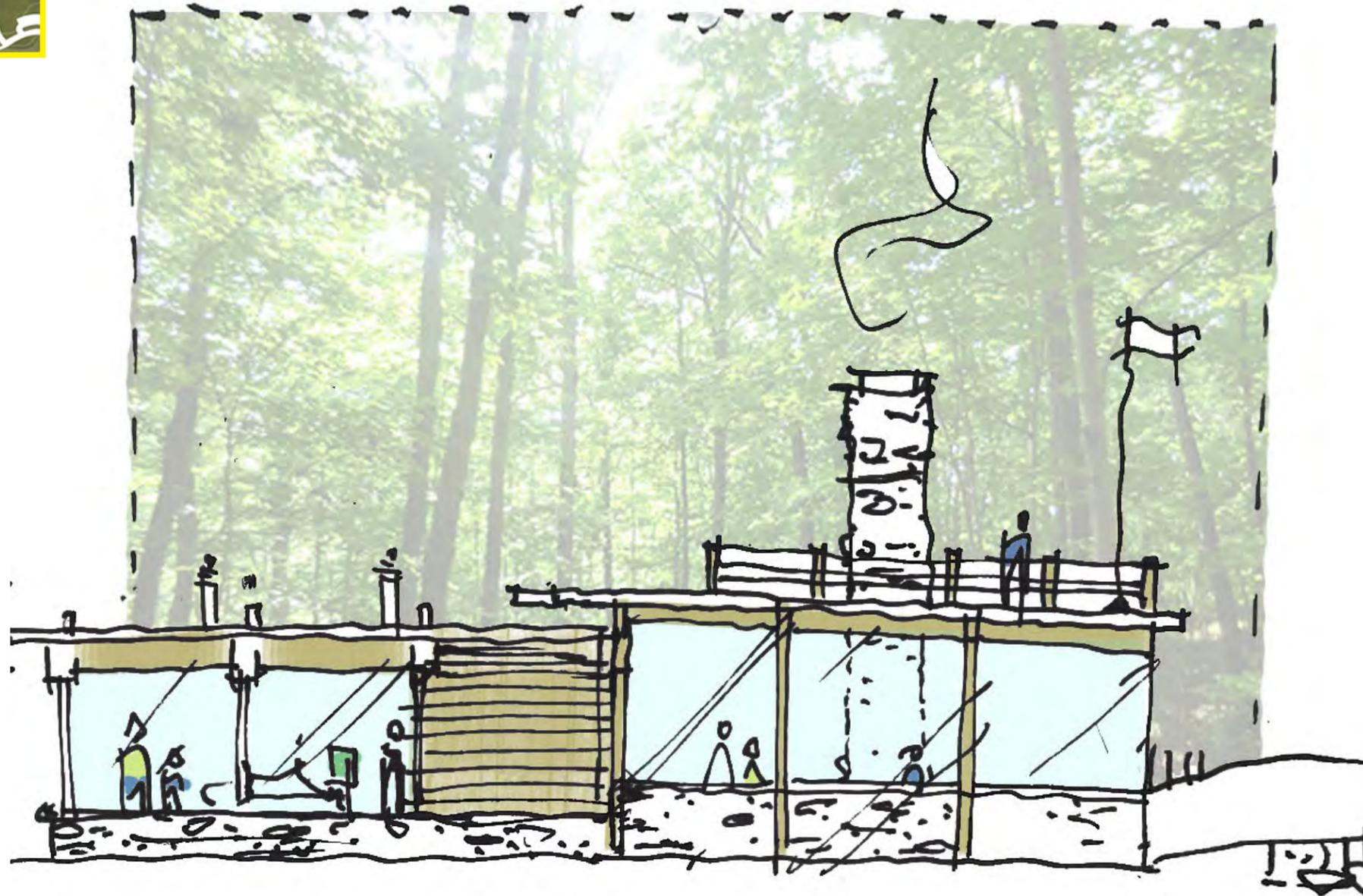
The remnants of the stone foundation of an old homestead cabin will become part of a sunken wildlife viewing station. This will create a unique blend of natural and cultural resource experience opportunities.

OVERLOOK



An overlook near Sugar Creek provides the perfect opportunity for visitors to pause and observe the rugged topography and scenic beauty of Sugar Creek and the park's lowlands.

## RETREAT CENTER: MEETING HOUSE

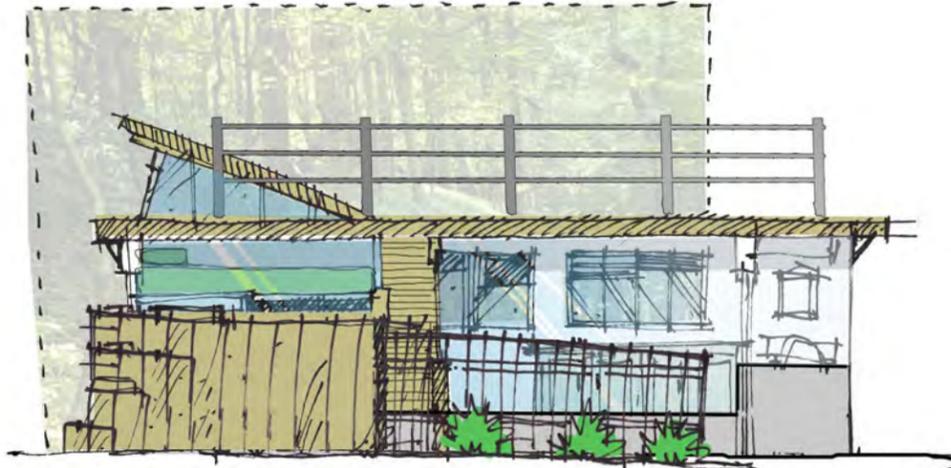


CONCEPTUAL CROSS SECTION OF RETREAT CENTER MEETING HOUSE

A retreat center will be located in the southern area of the park away from the more active areas to the north. The retreat center will be able to accommodate groups and individuals and could be used for an artist/researcher-in-residence program. Gatherings and meals could take place in the meeting house, which is shown at right.



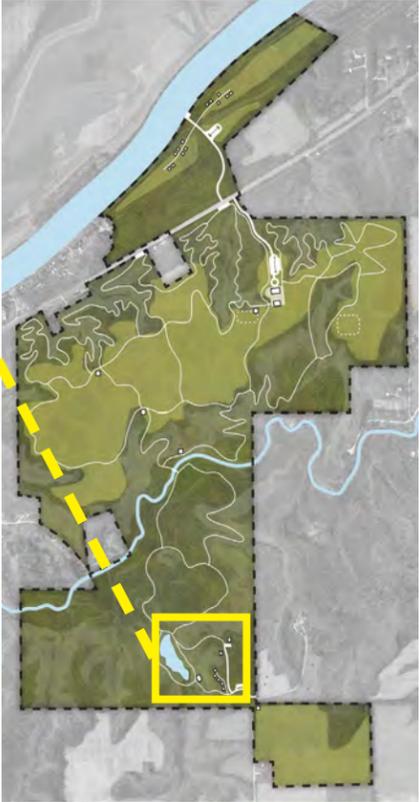
CONCEPTUAL CROSS SECTION OF RETREAT CENTER CABIN



CONCEPTUAL FRONT VIEW OF RETREAT CENTER CABIN



CONCEPTUAL SIDE VIEW OF RETREAT CENTER CABIN



Overnight visitors to the retreat center will stay in compact yet comfortable cabins. Each cabin will have a sleeping area, work area, and a private bathroom.

# INTERPRETIVE SIGNAGE



Custom designed interpretive sign panels provide educational information and direct a visitor's view and attention to the natural and cultural features or processes that can be observed throughout the park.



PHASING

The development of the Hoffman Nature Area is proposed to be implemented over a five year period. The phasing plan lays out a common sense approach for implementing the plan, putting smaller catalyst projects on the front end of the schedule. This will help build support for the project and engage new partners. There are opportunities for local forces to build certain features, while other features will require further analysis and professional services in order to be developed and implemented properly. The planned implementation can be flexible with projects shifting as needed to work within available budgets and to take advantage of unforeseen opportunities. The phasing plan should be reviewed annually and modified based on changes in funding availability, staffing, etc.

PROJECT TASKS	SCHEDULE																			
	YEAR 1				YEAR 2				YEAR 3				YEAR 4				YEAR 5			
	1ST QTR	2ND QTR	3RD QTR	4TH QTR	1ST QTR	2ND QTR	3RD QTR	4TH QTR	1ST QTR	2ND QTR	3RD QTR	4TH QTR	1ST QTR	2ND QTR	3RD QTR	4TH QTR	1ST QTR	2ND QTR	3RD QTR	4TH QTR
<b>PHASE 1</b>																				
A	New Access Road																			
<b>PHASE 2</b>																				
B	Entry Features																			
C	Shelter and Restroom Facility																			
<b>PHASE 3</b>																				
D	Canoe Camp and Restroom Facility																			
E	Mountain Bike Trail																			
F	Disc Golf																			
G	Primitive Camping																			
<b>PHASE 4</b>																				
A	Nature Center																			
B	Fitness Loop																			
C	Low Ropes Course																			
<b>PHASE 5</b>																				
A	Pedestrian Bridge																			
B	Retreat Center / Cabins																			

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