

# **BOB HARRISON WELLNESS AND ADVOCACY CENTER**

## **MASTER PLAN**

May, 2026

**GMC**

Goodwyn Mills Cawood





# Bob Harrison Wellness and Advocacy Center

## Master Plan

May, 2026

Prepared by:

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Prepared for:



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Client:

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# Table of Contents

Background, Goals & Objectives	6
Site Inventory & Analysis	14
Schematic Graphics	26
Final Master plan	32

# Background, Goals and Objectives



Bob Harrison  
Wellness and  
Advocacy Center

Pulaski Pike NW

Ceder Point Dr NW

Johnson Legacy Center

Location: Huntsville, AL

## Vision and Origin

In the early 2000s, Madison County District 6 Commissioner Robert “Bob” Harrison identified a growing and unmet community need in Northwest Huntsville for a central place where older adults could maintain active, connected, and empowered lives. With nearly 20,000 seniors residing in his district at the time, Harrison envisioned a facility that would serve as a comprehensive hub for wellness, fellowship, and community ownership.

Inspired by the Patrick Henry Hays Senior Center in North Little Rock, Arkansas, a facility he had seen firsthand; Harrison applied that model to the unique needs of Huntsville’s Cedar Point community. His leadership set in motion development of what would become the Bob Harrison Wellness and Advocacy Center.

## Goals and Objectives

The major goal for this project was for Madison County to explore the opportunity and feasibility of potential improvement to the Bob Harrison Wellness and Advocacy Center through a master plan. The property is a unique opportunity for the county, with its variety of existing uses, potential for recreation, and existing natural areas. The goal of this master plan is to provide the County with an updated vision for the future of the center, and a step-by-step phasing approach to implement park updates.

Through programmatic development with the client, community outreach and feedback, a wish list of desired amenities was created:

### Existing to upgrades:

- Back patio renovation
- Parking lot improvements
- Walking track improvements
- Building foundation landscape improvements

### New Amenities:

- Pickleball courts
- Trail system improvements
- Chipping green practice area
- Natural passive recreation areas
- Gateway improvements
- Updated wayfinding & signage
- New and renovated shade structures
- Amphitheater
- Open recreational space
- **Stormwater management**
- **Community garden**

## Existing Campus & Facility Overview

The Bob Harrison Wellness and Advocacy Center serves as a purpose-built senior wellness campus in Northwest Huntsville. Opened in 2013, the 20,000-square-foot facility was developed to promote active aging, lifelong learning, and social connection for District 6 residents.

Core Facilities Include:

- 160-seat multipurpose/event room
- Indoor heated pool
- Fitness center with elevated walking track
- Computer lab
- Commercial kitchen
- Board/meeting rooms
- Outdoor putting green
- Walking trail and pavilion (Phase II expansion)

The Center functions not only as a recreation facility but also as a civic and social anchor for the Cedar Point community.



## Regional Demographic Trends

Huntsville, Alabama continues to experience rapid population growth and long-term demographic shifts that underscore the importance of robust community infrastructure and services for all ages. As of the 2024 U.S. Census estimates, the city's population exceeds 240,000 residents and continues to grow significantly year over year. While the city has a relatively young median age compared to national averages, the proportion of residents aged 65 and over is approximately 16–17% and expected to continue increasing as national aging trends take hold locally.

The Northwest Huntsville and Madison County areas mirror broader regional dynamics: a significant share of residents aged 65 and above, ongoing growth in affordable housing options for seniors, and a concerted municipal focus on planning for long-term community needs. These demographic realities reinforce the strategic value of dedicated senior wellness facilities that promote health, social engagement, lifelong learning, and community integration for an aging population.

**240,000+**

**CITY  
RESIDENTS**

**16-17%  
AGED 65 &  
OVER**

## Planning Principles

- 1** Create a long-term improvement vision based on the communities wants and needs.
- 2** Develop a realistic and flexible roadmap for specific improvements.
- 3** Promote a proactive partnership to support the plan's implementation.

## Design Principles

- 1** Highlight and build off of the site's existing amenities and natural resources.
- 2** Respect the site's historical legacy, community needs, and ecosystem / wildlife habitat.
- 3** Include programming that accommodates a variety of users of all interests, demographics, and physical abilities.



# Site Inventory and Analysis

A study of the existing site conditions was conducted which included: Circulation & Access, Recreational & Active Uses, Topography, Hydrology, and Vegetation & Ecology. The following graphics represent that analysis.



# Existing Circulation and Access

## Site Access

### Existing Conditions

The site has four access points; three vehicular and one pedestrian. Along Pulaski Pike Northwest, there are dedicated pedestrian and vehicular connections. On the northeast side, a vehicular loop and secondary pedestrian entry connect to Cedar Point Drive Northwest.

The Pulaski Drive entrance has strong potential to become a prominent gateway feature for the Center.

### Opportunities and Constraints

Both vehicular entrances lack a strong visual identity. A prominent entry monument along Pulaski Drive is identified as an appropriate location to improve visibility, while smaller monument signage along Cedar Point Drive can support wayfinding.

Additional pedestrian connections along the eastern residential edge are recommended to enhance accessibility and support community engagement.

## Vehicular Site Circulation

### Existing Conditions

Vehicular circulation is supported by the recent connection between the entry loop and Pulaski Drive. The majority of visitors enter from Pulaski Drive and use the parking lot south of the building, with additional parking located east of the building and near the event pavilion. Certain areas of the parking lots show signs of deterioration related to drainage and traffic.

### Opportunities and Constraints

Improvements should prioritize repairing areas impacted by erosion and traffic wear. Recommended upgrades include milling, resurfacing, and re striping existing asphalt. Reconfiguring parking near the event pavilion may improve functionality and accommodate larger or more formal gatherings.



Pulaski Pike NW



Cedar Point Dr NW

## Pedestrian Site Circulation

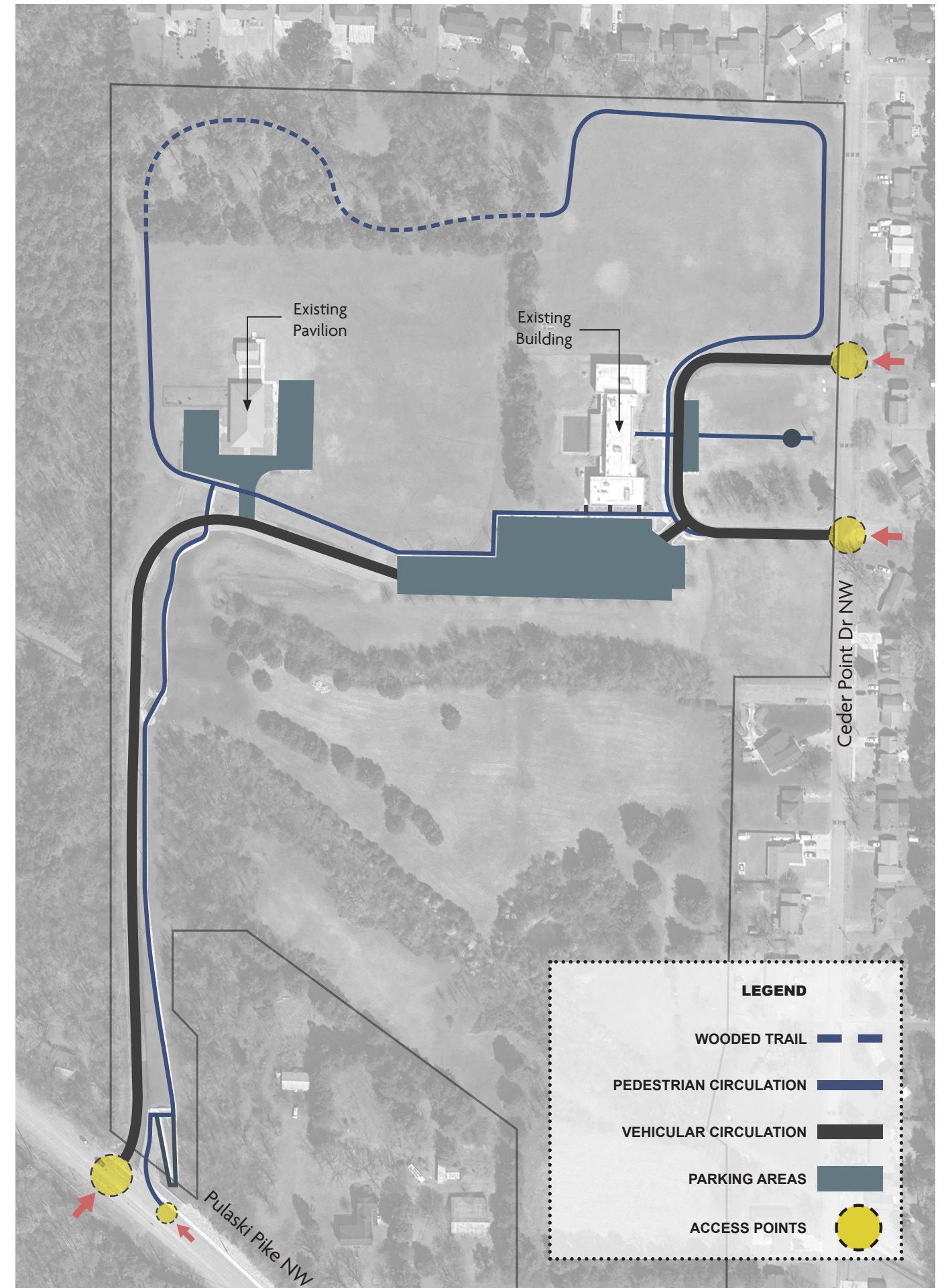
### Existing Conditions

Pedestrian circulation consists of three primary components:

- Building-oriented walkways connecting entrances and immediate site areas
- Sidewalks linking parking areas and site amenities, including a primary walk from Pulaski Drive;
- A 0.83-mile outer asphalt walking loop offering low-to high-impact exercise opportunities.

### Opportunities and Constraints

The existing pedestrian circulation system provides a functional framework, with opportunities to expand connectivity to better integrate current and future site uses. Enhancements to the walking trail network are identified to support programming, improve internal circulation, and accommodate potential future site development.



# Existing Recreational and Active Use Areas

## Indoor Active Use Areas

### Existing Conditions

The Bob Harrison Center building is the primary use on the site and provides spaces for classes, activities, and social engagement. The modern brick building serves as a focal point, while the surrounding landscape, including the back patio, has areas that require upgrades to support functionality and aesthetics.

### Opportunities and Constraints

Enhancements to the foundational plantings and landscape surrounding the building are identified to improve appearance and site functionality. Strengthening physical connections between the building and other site amenities is proposed to support circulation and overall usability.



Pavilion

## Outdoor Active Use Areas

### Existing Conditions

Outdoor spaces include a large event pavilion and an adjacent back patio. The pavilion, constructed of brick and metal, contains enclosed service areas and restrooms. The back patio has a synthetic turf surface for gatherings, with areas showing surface deterioration and rippling due to drainage issues.

### Opportunities and Constraints

Enhancing connectivity between the pavilion and the main building is identified to support site functionality during events. The back patio is proposed as a flexible, multipurpose space for formal and informal gatherings. Drainage improvements and landscape upgrades are recommended to increase usability and site value.



Back Patio

## Recreational Space

### Existing Conditions

The site includes three open fields primarily used for unorganized recreation. The northeast field has the steepest slope, which limits potential uses. The southeast field is relatively flat and used informally by the neighborhood. The central field, located between the pavilion and building, has a gentle slope and accommodates temporary sports and recreational activities.

### Opportunities and Constraints

The open fields present opportunities for future development. The northeast field is suited for passive or creative recreational uses due to its slope. The southeast field can accommodate flexible recreation because of its flat terrain and proximity to the neighborhood. The central field is positioned to support organized events and programming.



Open Space



**LEGEND**

- WOODED WALKING TRAIL - - -
- WALKING TRAIL —
- OUTDOOR ACTIVE USE AREAS ■
- RECREATIONAL USE AREAS - - -
- INDOOR ACTIVE USES AREA ■

# Existing Topography

## Site Slopes

### Existing Conditions

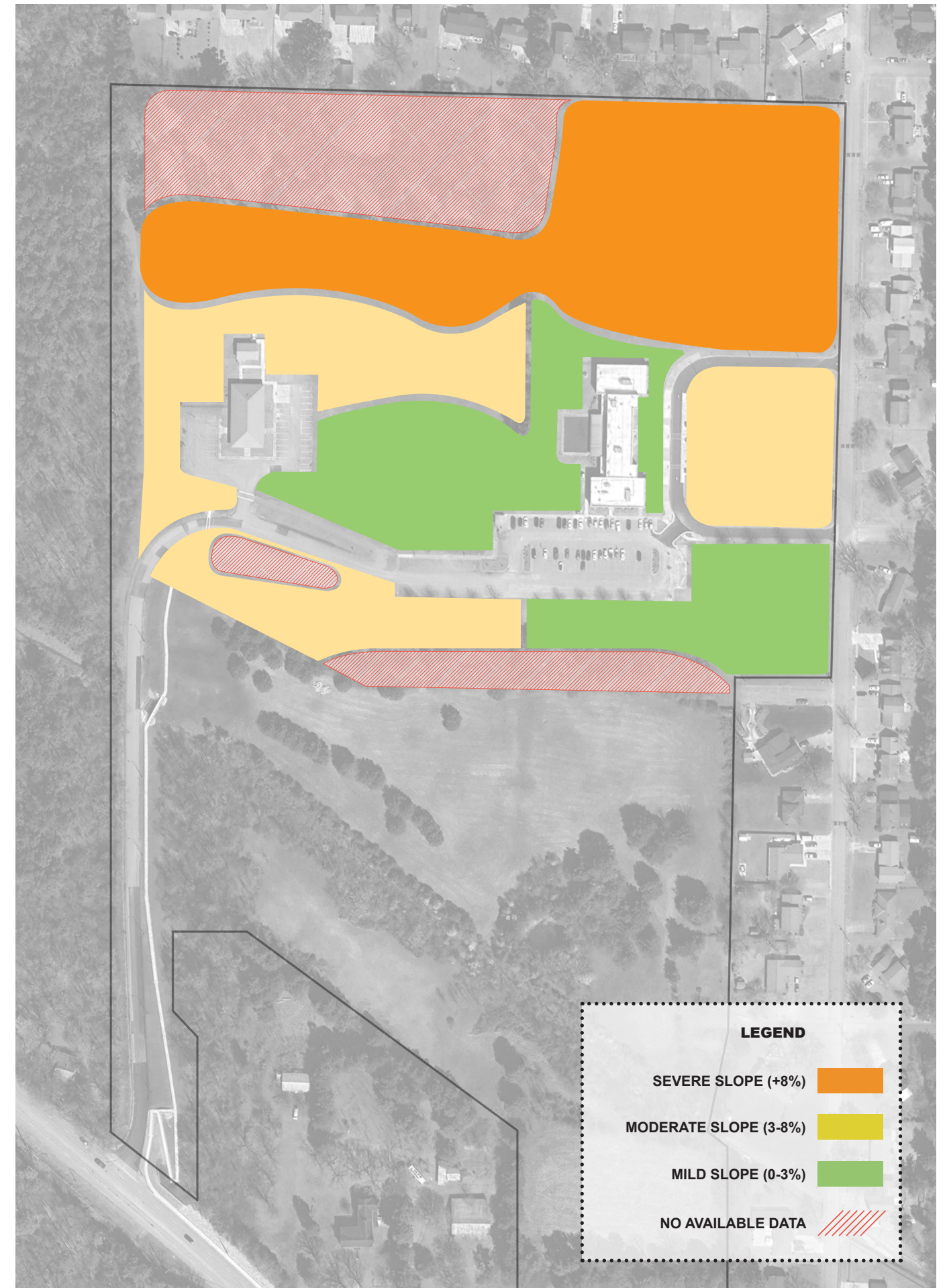
The site is largely divided up into 3 slope categories:

- 1. +8% Slope
- 2. 3-8% Slope
- 3. 0-3% Slope

Each of these categories have unique use possibilities. The northeast corner of the site and tree line have the steepest slopes falling towards the building, while the interior vehicular loop and area directly behind the event pavilion has a slightly less severe slope. Finally, the areas between the building and pavilion as well as the southeast of the site are the flattest pieces of the property.

### Opportunities and Constraints

The areas with severe slopes have a specific set of uses such as trails and certain recreational spaces due to the nature of the land. Medium slope areas could also be used for trails and more formal items such as recreational fields. The low slope areas are great for gathering spaces designated for organized athletic events.



# Existing Hydrology

## Site Drainage Patterns

### Existing Conditions

Stormwater runoff is directed through a series of drainage swales that lead to a detention pond south of the event pavilion. From there, water is conveyed underground to a headwall beneath the pedestrian bridge and into a larger off-site drainage system. While the buildings are well protected from surface runoff, several paved areas have experienced erosion and washout due to improper drainage.

Open space areas experience lower flow, with runoff dispersed across larger surfaces before entering channelized swales that connect to the detention pond. Access across these drainage swales is limited and affects site circulation.

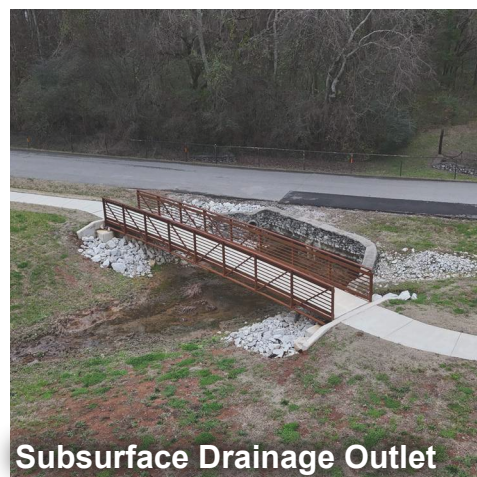
### Opportunities and Constraints

The existing detention pond provides adequate runoff capacity, reducing the need for major expansion. Current drainage patterns identify suitable locations for future amenities such as pickleball courts, recreational fields, and a potential amphitheater.

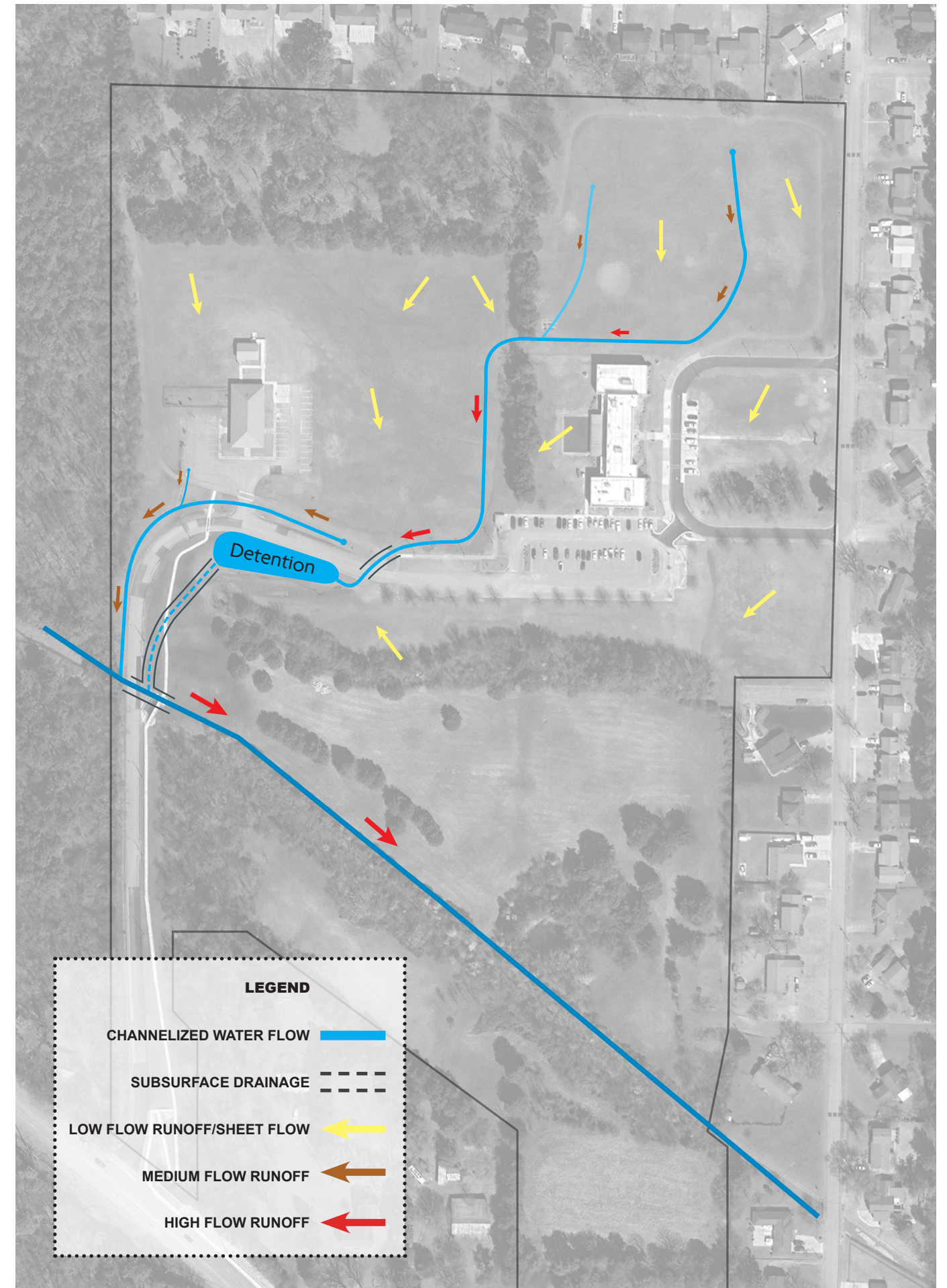
Improving connectivity will require additional piping or small bridges to allow safe crossings over drainage channels. Erosion and washout can be addressed through new storm inlets and the addition of rain gardens and bioswales, which would also improve water quality and reduce downstream runoff impacts.



Detention Area



Subsurface Drainage Outlet



# Existing Vegetation and Ecology

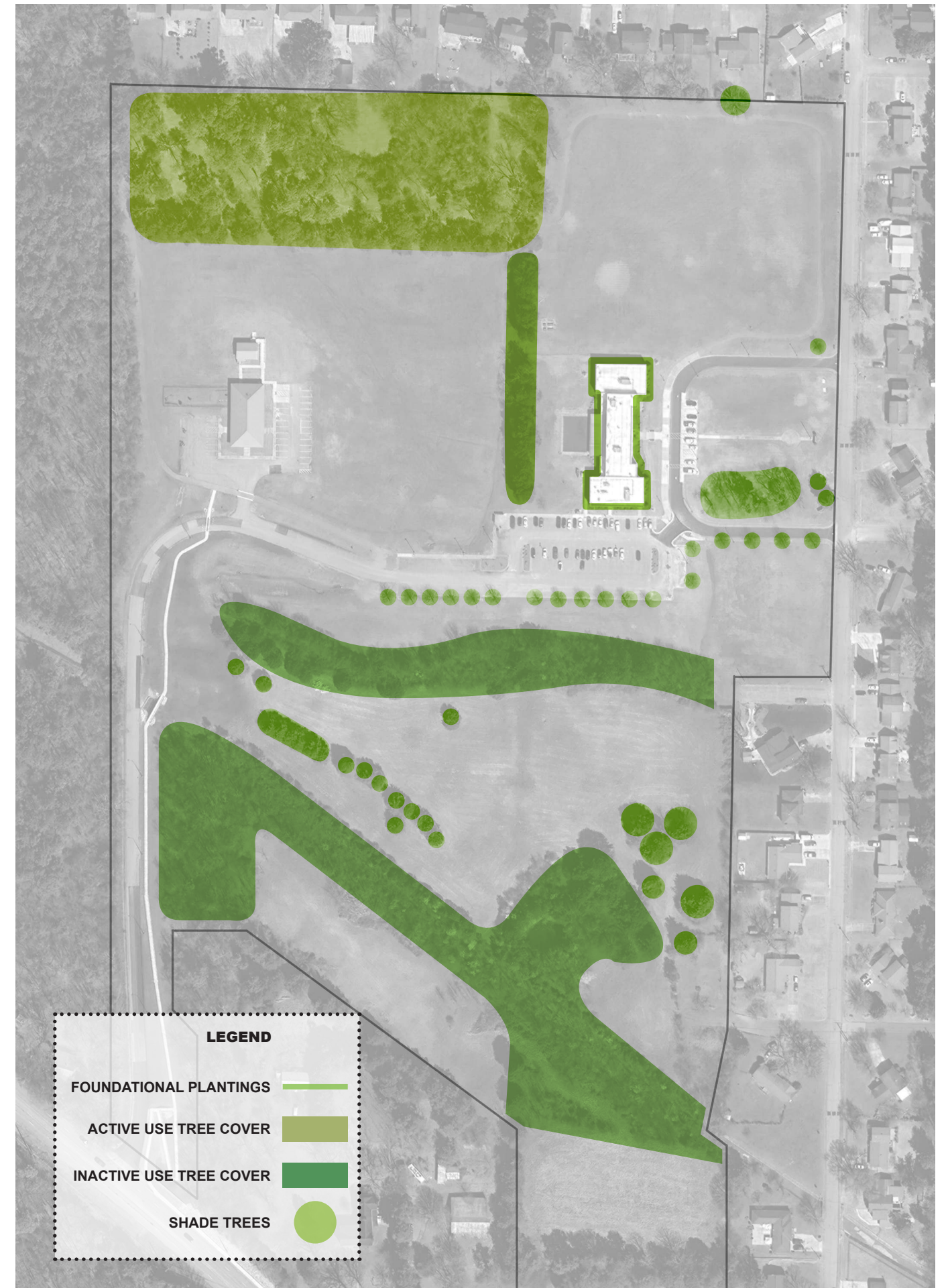
## Site Landscape

### Existing Conditions

The site is largely open space with tree cover designated to specific parts of the site and surroundings. A tree line sits between open spaces that separate the primary building and the event pavilion. At the south side of the site, a tree line separates a large natural area and a few residences from the project site. On the north side, there is a portion of the walking trail that is covered by tree canopy and provides a great space for users of the walking loop.

### Opportunities and Constraints

Promoting tree conservation will be imperative to providing a beneficial and enjoyable site. The existing landscape separates the spaces nicely and adds value to different aspects of the property. The primary area for improvement would be around the building and creating a better sense of entrance to the access points. There is also potential in introducing a rain water catchment system to recycle rainwater captured from the roof of the building for irrigation of any future landscape improvements.



# Schematic Graphics

**Schematic design for the master plan was developed based on site inventory and analysis, client feedback, and community input. The community input data and the schematic design of the master plan is represented in the following graphic.**



# Community Feedback - Public Meeting

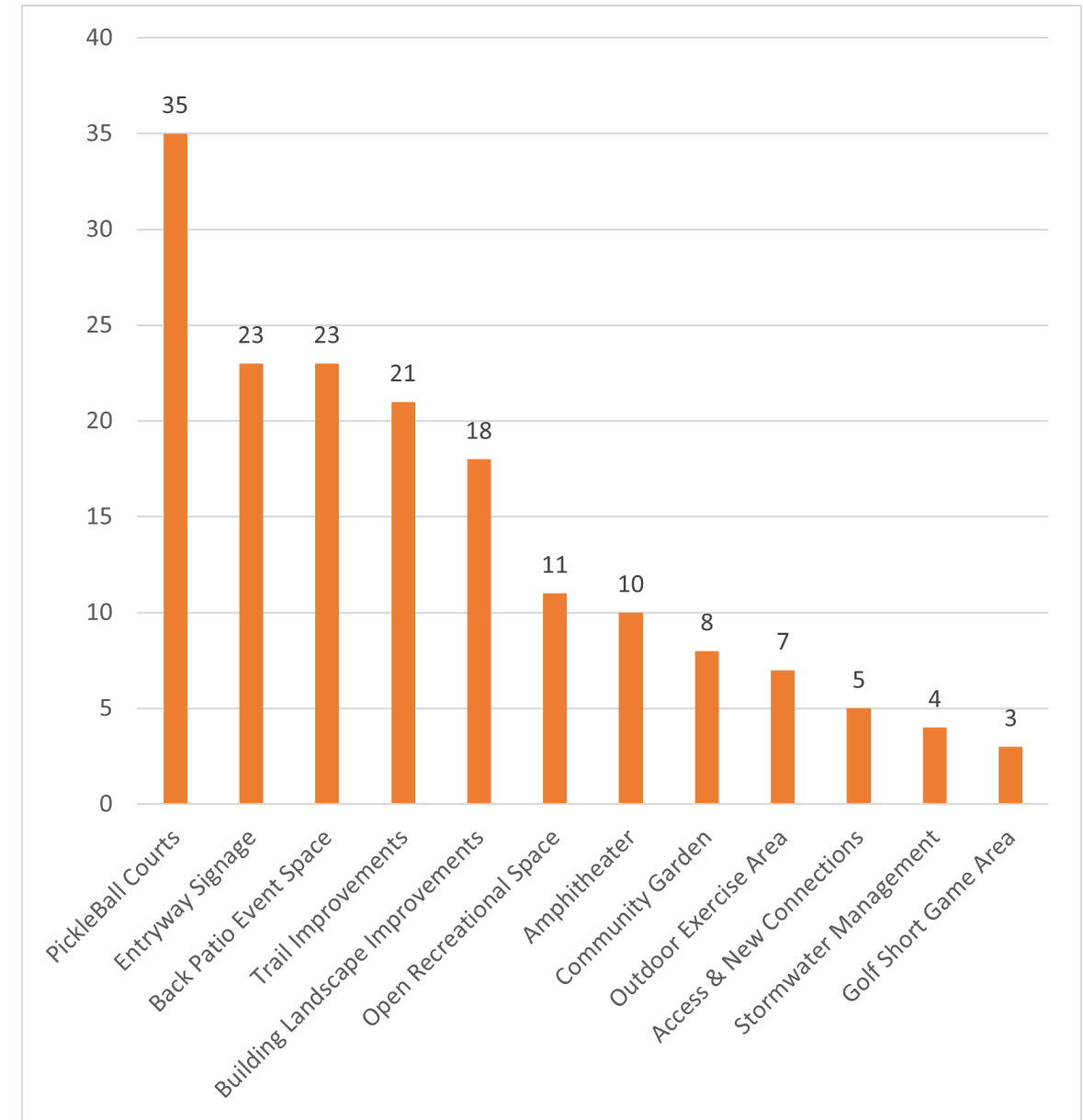
The bar chart summarizes community input collected during the public meeting in Huntsville, Alabama for the Bob Harris Wellness and Advocacy Center Master Plan.

- The results indicate that Pickleball Courts received the highest level of support (35 responses), followed by Entryway Signage (23) and Back Patio Event Space (23).
- Trail Improvements (21) and Building Landscape Improvements (18) also ranked prominently among community priorities.
- Moderate interest was expressed in Open Recreational Space (11), Amphitheater (10), and Community Garden (8).
- Outdoor Exercise Area (7), Access and New Connections (5), Stormwater Management (4), and Golf Short Game Area (3) received comparatively fewer responses.

Overall, the data reflects strong community interest in active recreation amenities and site enhancements that promote accessibility, gathering, and outdoor engagement. This data helps identify priorities and phasing order of these improvements.



Meeting feedback bar chart :



**168** TOTAL RESPONSES

**TOP PICKS:**

- 1 PICKLEBALL COURTS - 35 VOTES**
- 2 ENTRYWAY SIGNAGE & BACK PATIO EVENT SPACE - 23 VOTE EACH**
- 3 TRAIL IMPROVEMENTS -21 VOTES**

## Schematic Design - Bubble Diagram

### Schematic Design:

Based on the site inventory and analysis conducted, and public meeting data collected, amenities are proposed in the most suitable locations on site. Design decision rationale are discussed below:

- The pickleball courts near the parking and shade trees provides an opportunity for a pleasant active space.
- Open lawn near the pavilion and parking provides an opportunity for large-scale outdoor activity.
- The amphitheater helps navigate the steep grade and provides a suitable place to sit near the open lawn.
- The existing back patio has the opportunity to become a nice outdoor event space for smaller events such as weddings or birthdays.
- The formal garden near the building provides a passive recreation space near the building and a resting spot along the new trails.
- A detention wetland is proposed at the existing drainage depression to enhance beauty, reduce stormwater runoff, create habitat for wildlife, and enhance biodiversity on site.
- The proposed boardwalk provides an opportunity to observe the native habitat and ecosystem at the wetland.
- Entry signage and placemaking signage along the main entry from Pulaski Pike NW help establish a strong identity and sense of place for the Wellness Advocacy Center.
- A multi-use field space is proposed at the flattest open area on site. It is also located near the existing neighborhoods to promote interaction between the Wellness Center and the surrounding community.
- The golf area is proposed within the large, steeply sloped open space located at the northeast corner of the site. This amenity is intended to enhance the overall experience of the Wellness Center by providing a unique recreational opportunity for both local users and visitors alike.
- No amenities have been proposed within the tree-covered area with trails at the northwest corner of the site to preserve the existing mature tree canopy. However, information and wayfinding signs have been proposed to enhance the trail experience and sense of place for the site.







# Final Master Plan

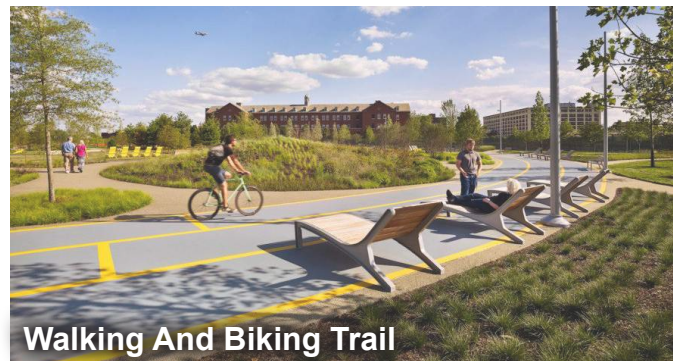
The final master plan represents a future vision for the Bob Harrison Wellness and Advocacy Center at Huntsville, AL. This vision is meant to be a long term road map that should drive development within the site for the next 15-20 years. Projects may be phased based on level of need and available funding.



# The Master Plan

The master plan shows a detailed graphic representation of the overall vision based on the schematic design. It illustrates the locations, sizes, and orientations of proposed amenities. It also identifies tree types, locations, quantities, and sizes. Additionally, it shows an overall graphic for parking lot improvements, trail alignments, and crosswalk improvements.

-  **Shade Trees**
-  **Wetland Trees**
-  **Understory Trees**
-  **Foundation Planting**



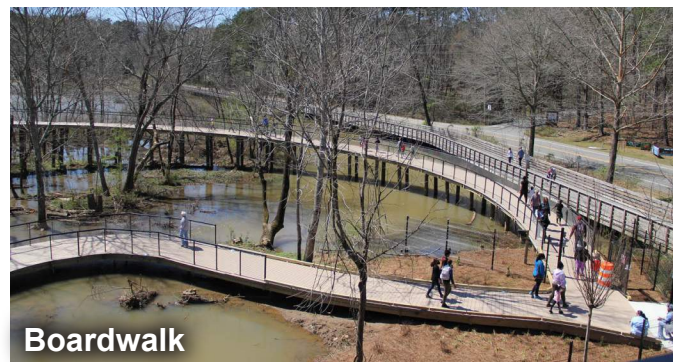
Walking And Biking Trail



Raised Crosswalk



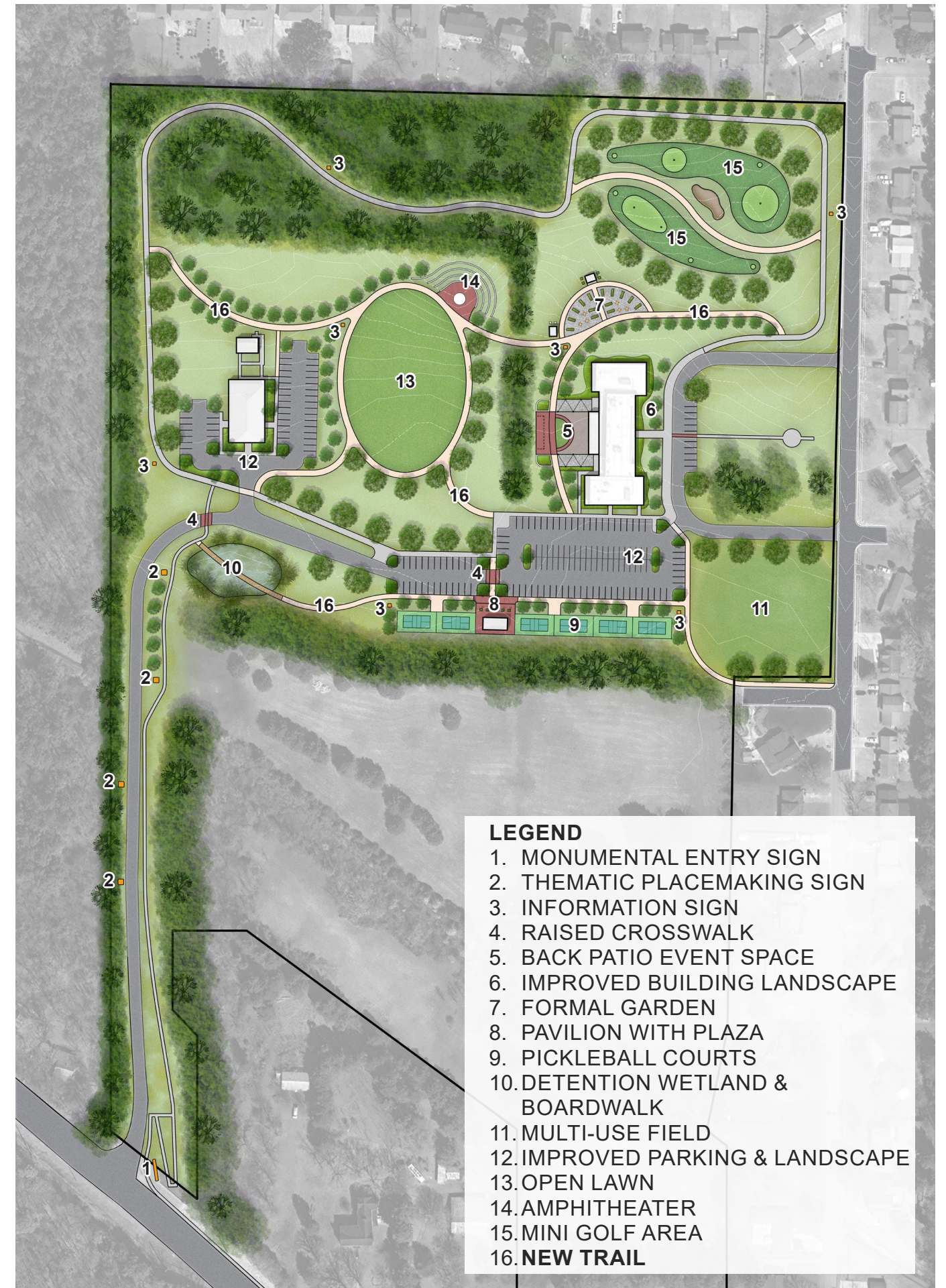
Trail Lined with Trees



Boardwalk



Parking Lot Landscape Improvements



- LEGEND**
1. MONUMENTAL ENTRY SIGN
  2. THEMATIC PLACEMAKING SIGN
  3. INFORMATION SIGN
  4. RAISED CROSSWALK
  5. BACK PATIO EVENT SPACE
  6. IMPROVED BUILDING LANDSCAPE
  7. FORMAL GARDEN
  8. PAVILION WITH PLAZA
  9. PICKLEBALL COURTS
  10. DETENTION WETLAND & BOARDWALK
  11. MULTI-USE FIELD
  12. IMPROVED PARKING & LANDSCAPE
  13. OPEN LAWN
  14. AMPHITHEATER
  15. MINI GOLF AREA
  16. NEW TRAIL

# Master Plan Zones & Phasing

The master plan has been organized into five distinct areas based on the proposed program elements:

- The Advocacy Center
- Active Recreation
- Entryway
- Multipurpose Space
- Natural Recreation

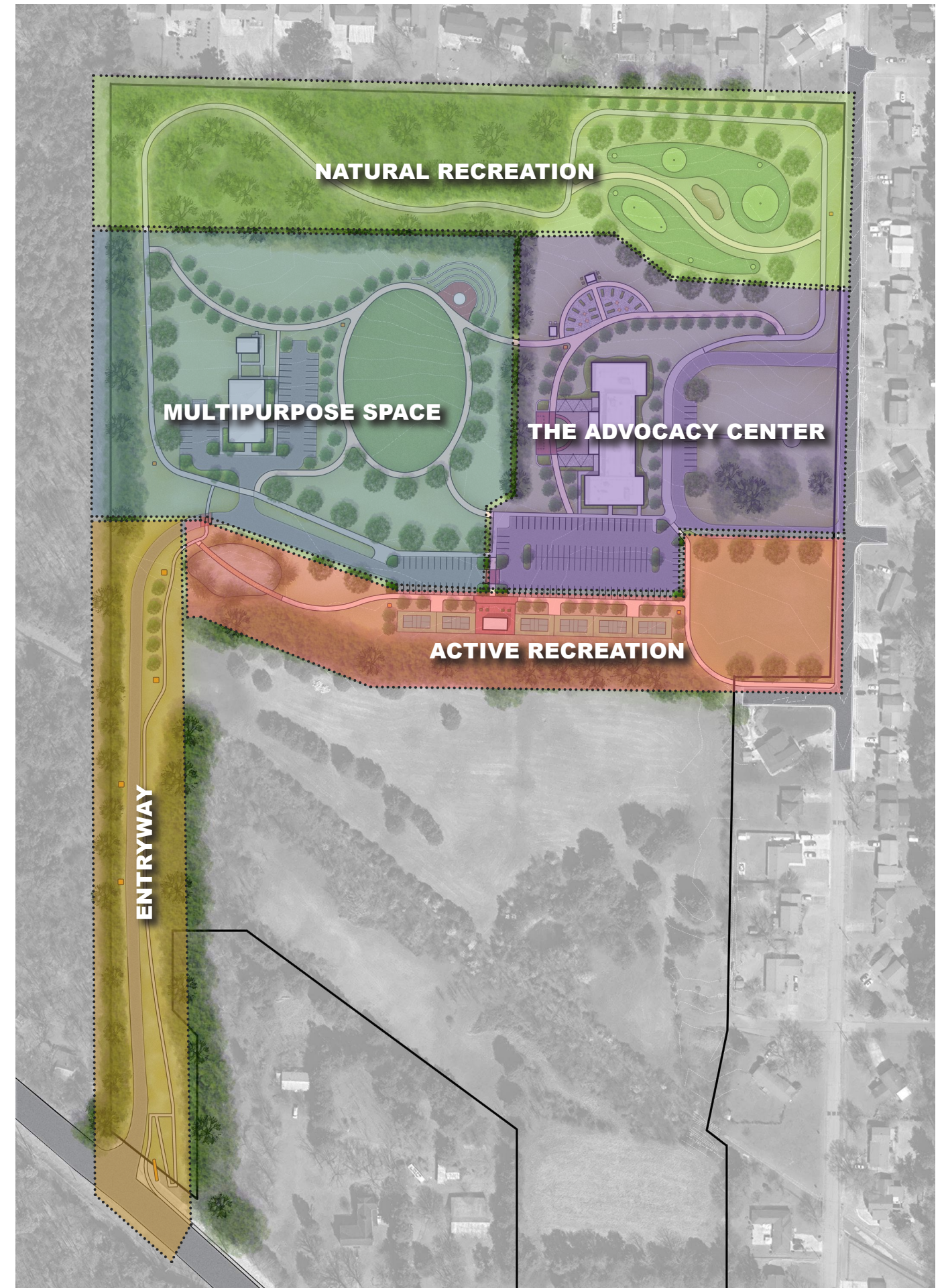
This framework allows for a clear and focused discussion of each area in the following pages of this document and establishes five smaller, more manageable projects to support phased implementation.

Input gathered during the public meeting helped guide the recommended order of development. Based on community feedback, the Active Recreation and The Advocacy Center areas are identified as priorities for initial implementation, followed by Entryway Signage, then Multipurpose Space, and finally Natural Recreation.

**Priority Rankings:**

1. Active Recreation
2. Entryway
3. The Advocacy Center
4. Multipurpose Space
5. Natural Recreation.

Following pages illustrate each area in more detail.



# Active Recreation



The “Active Recreation” area is the linear segment along the existing southern parking lot that will get a lot more activation after the proposed improvements. The proposed facilities include: six Pickleball courts, a pavilion & plaza space, food truck parking, an open field area for the community, a new trail, wetland/detention area, a boardwalk and some information signage.



Food Truck Parking



Pickleball Courts



Pickleball Courts and Pavilion Perspective

# Entryway Signage

The "Entryway Signage" primarily includes adding signage along the main vehicular and pedestrian entry from Pulaski Pike NW road. There are three tiers of signage:

**1. Monumental Entry Sign:**

Located near the entry from Pulaski Pike NW, the monumental sign wall will mark the main entry to the site with bold lettering.

**2. Thematic Placemaking Sign:**

Four comparatively smaller placemaking wall signs along the path will promote four themes of wellness as mentioned below:

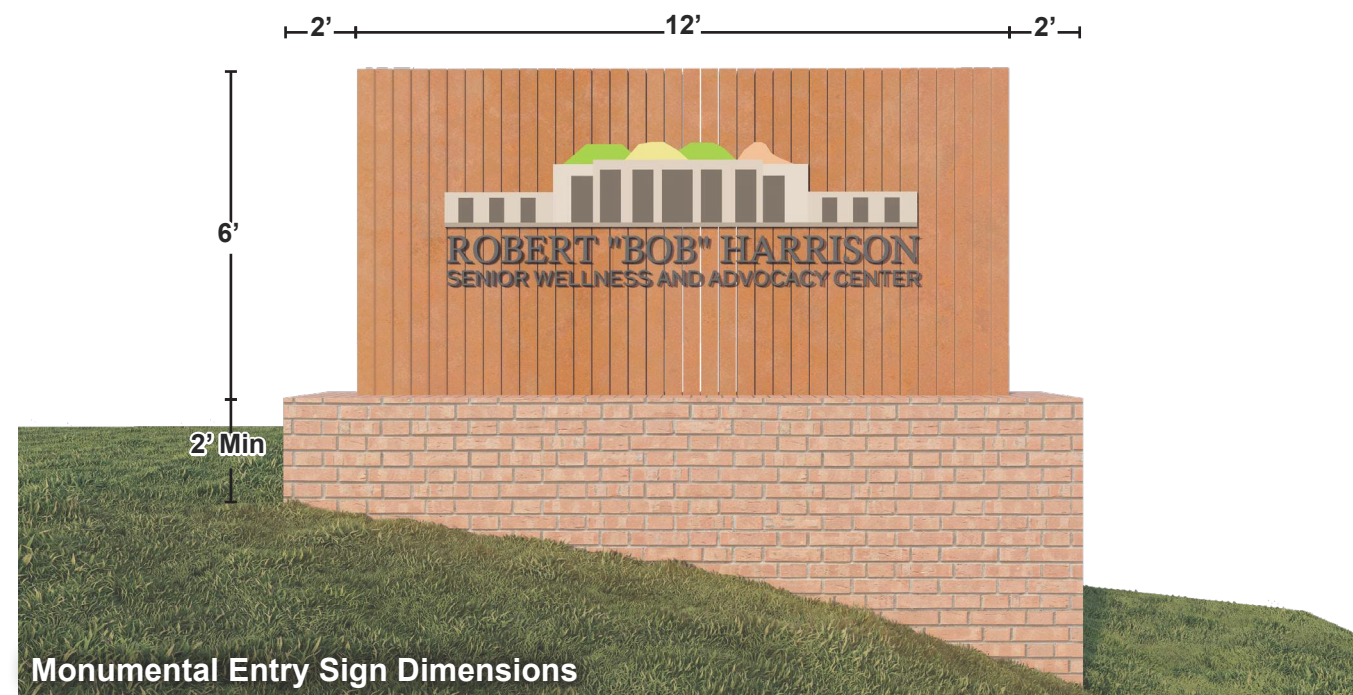
- A. **Physical:** Focuses on health habits like nutrition, exercise, and sleep.
- B. **Emotional:** Involves understanding and accepting feelings, and building resilience.
- C. **Social:** Emphasizes positive relationships and connection to the community.
- D. **Spiritual:** Centers on finding meaning, purpose, and values.

**5. Information & Wayfinding Sign:**

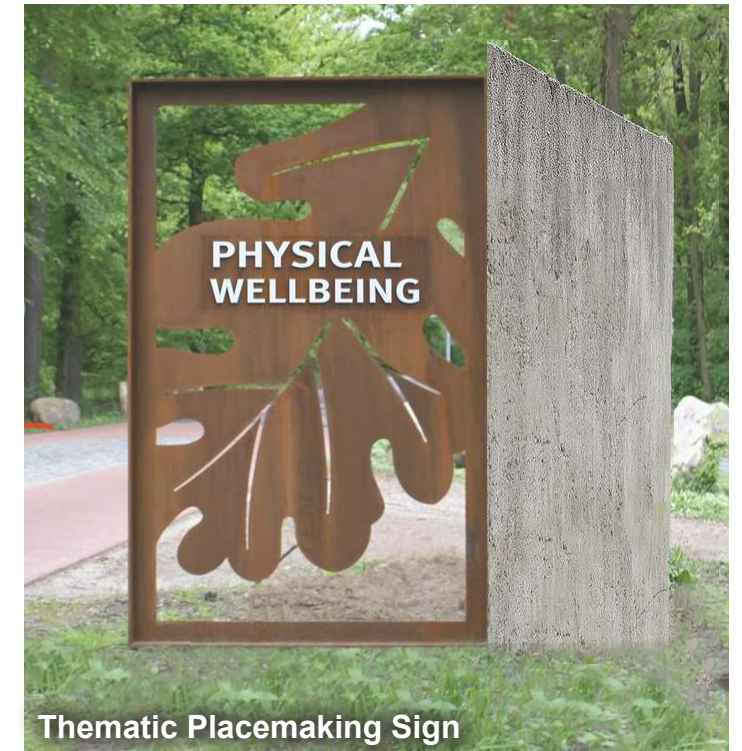
These sign will be located along the trails containing informations and instructions.



Monumental Entry Sign Perspective



Monumental Entry Sign Dimensions



Thematic Placemaking Sign



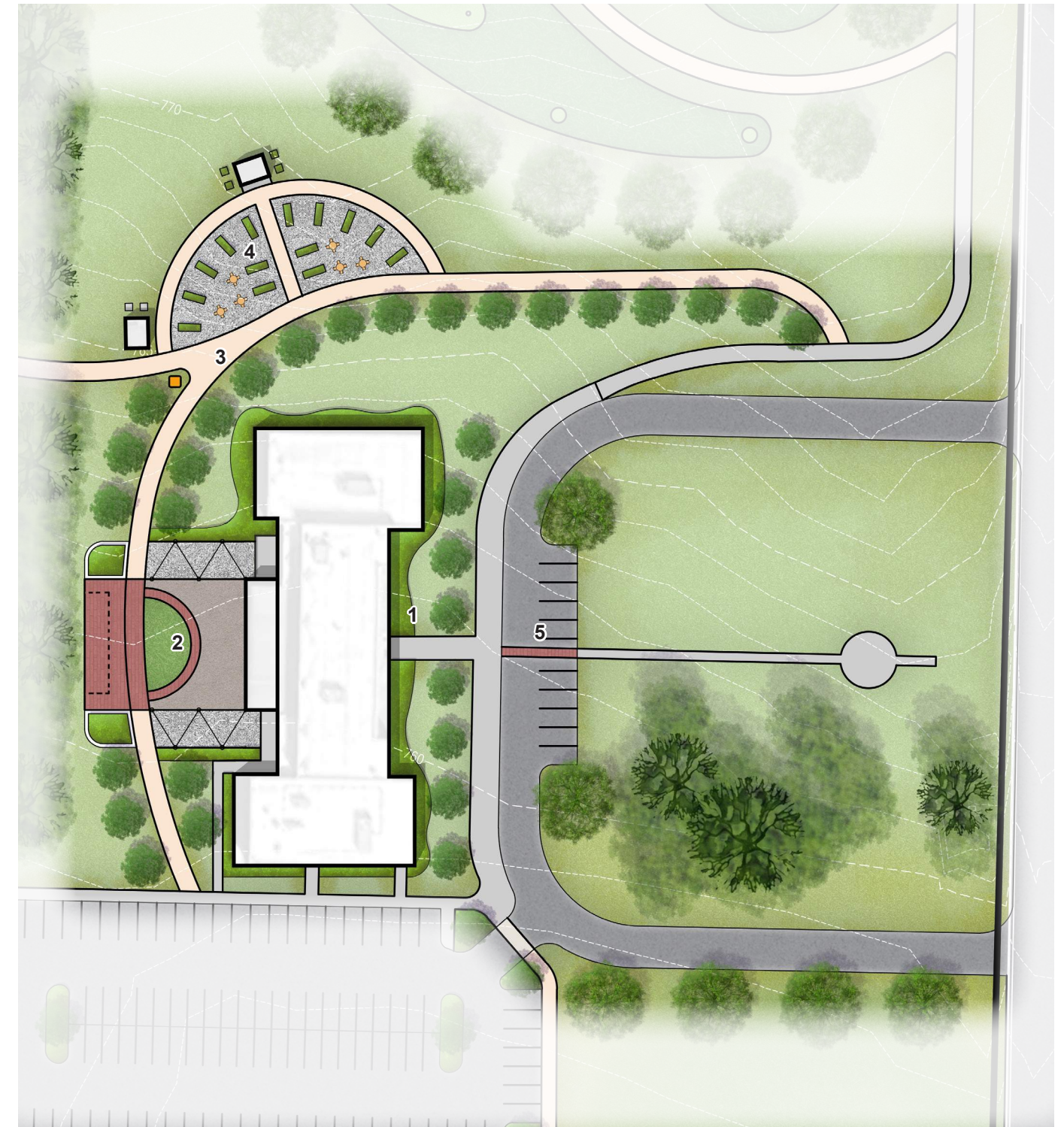
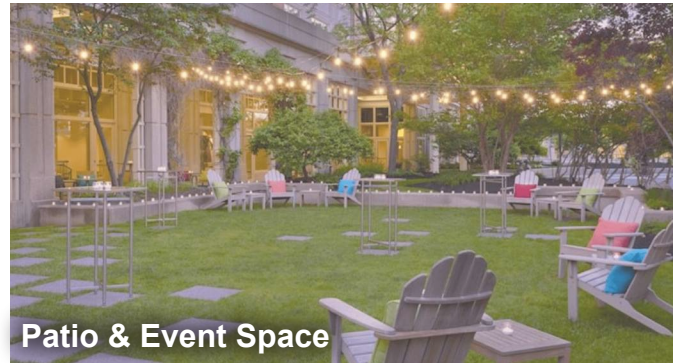
Information & Wayfinding Sign

**LEGEND**

- 1. MONUMENTAL ENTRY SIGN
- 2. PHYSICAL WELLNESS PLACEMAKING SIGN
- 3. EMOTIONAL WELLNESS PLACEMAKING SIGN
- 4. SOCIAL WELLNESS PLACEMAKING SIGN
- 5. SPIRITUAL WELLNESS PLACEMAKING SIGN

# The Advocacy Center

The master plan area identified as “The Advocacy Center”, primarily includes the existing building, back patio, parking areas, and flagpole plaza. Proposed improvements within this zone include a redesigned and enhanced back patio, enhanced landscaping surrounding the building, new crosswalks and the addition of a new formal garden along the new trail at the building’s northern edge.



**LEGEND**

- 1. ENHANCED BUILDING LANDSCAPE AROUND EXISTING BUILDING
- 2. REDESIGNED PATIO WITH CRUSHED STONE, PAVERS, SOD & STRING LIGHTS
- 3. NEW TRIAL CONNECTION
- 4. NEW FORMAL GARDEN WITH PLANTER BEDS, SEATING, TRELLISES, AN ARBOR, AND A SERVICE SHED.
- 5. CROSSWALK CONNECTING THE FLAG PLAZA TO THE EXISTING LOOP TRAIL

# Multipurpose Space

The “Multipurpose Space” area in the masterplan suggests converting the empty space between the pavilion and the advocacy center into an open lawn and a small amphitheater space connected by trails. It also suggests extending the eastern parking lot to better support the newly proposed programs and improved landscape along the pillion and the parking lot. Additionally, it suggests adding a row of shade trees along the existing loop trail and information signage along trails.



Open Lawn and Amphitheater Perspective



**LEGEND**

- 1. OPEN LAWN SPACE (SOD OR SEED)
- 2. AMPHITHEATER WITH SEATING WALLS AND STAGE
- 3. NEW TRAIL CONNECTIONS
- 4. PARKING LOT EXTENSION
- 5. IMPROVED LANDSCAPE ALONG PAVILION AND PARKING
- 6. INFORMATION SIGNAGE
- 7. NEW SHADE TREES ALONG TRAIL

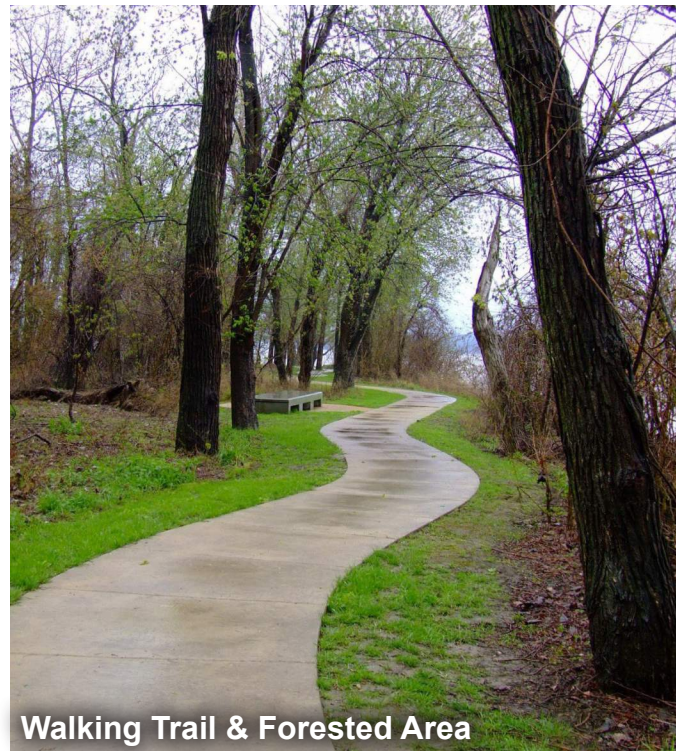
# Natural Recreation



The “Natural Recreation” area in the masterplan proposes a mini golf area on the empty land at the north-east side of the site. It does not suggest much intervention in the forested area with trail other than adding some information signage along the trail. The chipping green area can be synthetic turf to reduce maintenance cost.



Chipping Green



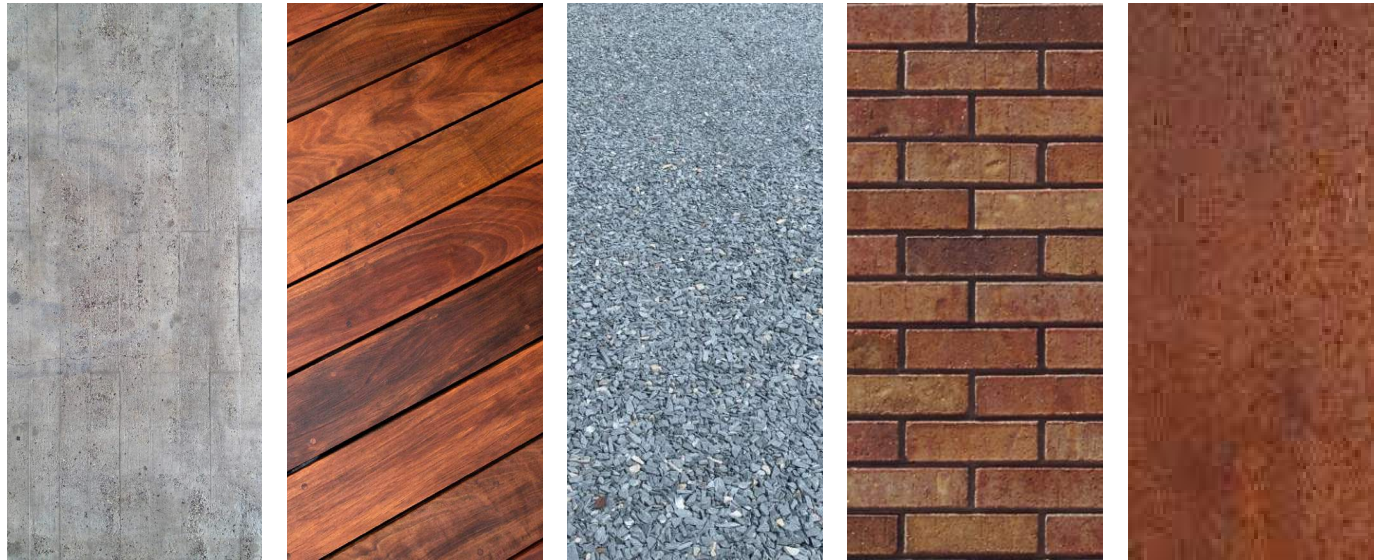
Walking Trail & Forested Area



Perspective

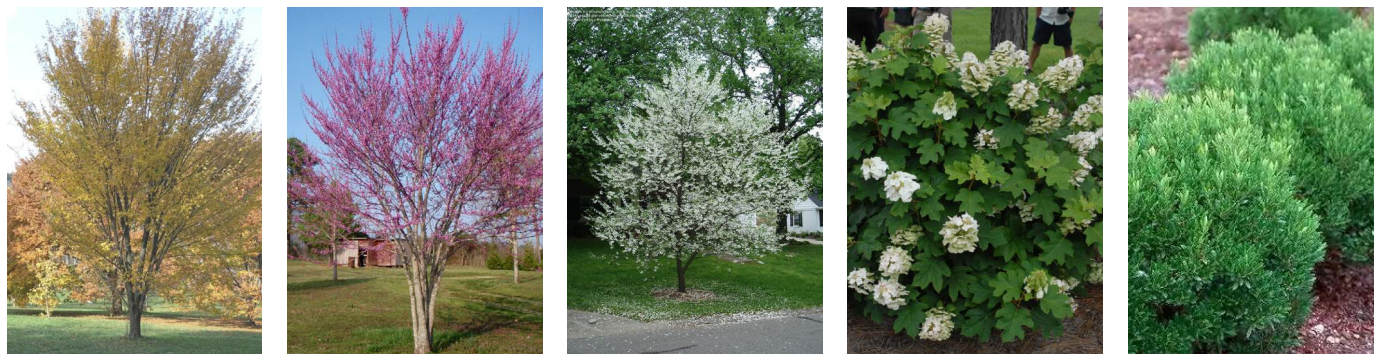
## Material Pallet

This master plan seeks to establish a visual identity in the materials used throughout the site. A cohesive materials palette can go a long way in creating a sense of place. The design team recommends a modern, yet rustic character to future improvements through the use of materials like exposed/precast concrete, powder coated or weathered metals, exposed brick, crushed stone, and wood. New structures like the pavilions, as well as signage and amenities, should seek to make use of these materials in order to create a cohesive feel throughout the site.



## Plant Pallet

This master plan calls for planting in different areas including building surroundings, parking lots and along trails. The goal is to have as much native plant species as possible. In case of specific requirements some non native shrubs or specimen trees may be planted.



American Elm

Eastern Redbud

Carolina Silverbell

Hydrangea

Compact Inkberry

## Afterword

The Bob Harrison Wellness and Advocacy Center Master Plan provides a clear, long-term vision to enhance a key community hub in Northwest Huntsville. Building on the Center's existing facilities, including the building, multipurpose spaces, walking trails, and outdoor pavilion, the plan outlines improvements that support active recreation, social engagement, and lifelong wellness.

Guided by site analysis and community input, proposed enhancements include upgraded back patios and landscaping, new pickleball courts, a golf chipping area, amphitheater, open lawns, and natural recreation spaces, all designed to respect the site's ecology and historical character. Improved circulation, signage, and way finding will strengthen accessibility and connectivity across the property.

Organized into five key areas—Active Recreation, the Advocacy Center, Entryway Signage, Multipurpose Spaces, and Natural Recreation—the plan provides a phased, flexible framework for implementation. Together, these improvements will reinforce the Center's identity, expand its programming, and ensure it continues to serve as a vibrant, inclusive destination for seniors and the wider community for decades to come.



**Bob Harrison Wellness and Advocacy  
Center - Master Plan - May, 2026**

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Goodwyn Mills Cawood**